The Seraphic Highway

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Franciscan Fathers
133 Golden Gate Ave
San Francisco
Calif

My God and My All!

The Seraphic Highway

Talks to Tertiaries and Non-Tertiaries

on

The Third Order of St. Francis

By

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To dear St. Francis of Assisi,
who has shown millions of us a
safe, short, easy and sweet way to
Jesus Crucified,
this book is gratefully dedicated
as a token of unqualified admiration
and love, on the seventh centenary of
his holy death.

The Author

The Blessing of St. Francis

"The Lord bless and keep thee! May He show His Face to thee and have pity on thee! May He turn His Countenance towards thee and give thee peace! The Lord bless thee!"

FOREWORD

WHEN our Savior plainly tells us in the gospel, that the way to heaven is narrow, and that there are but few upon it, how can we speak of a Seraphic Highway to heaven?

A narrow path may yet be in reality a highway, if it has been and is still used by kings and queens of holiness, and by representatives of all professions and classes of life aspiring after salvation. Such is the way tried out by himself and then traced out by St. Francis to all his followers. All of them who held this way to the end entered heaven; many of them attained the highest regions of paradise.

Having been successfully travelled for seven continuous centuries by people of the most varied temperaments, characters and life conditions, and having never misled or disappointed a single one of its faithful followers, and being easily discovered and plainly recognizable from its beginning to its end, the seraphic road to heaven lays good claim to being called a highway.

The autoist who is bent on reaching a certain destination handily and securely, is grateful to the man who gives him a chart and points out a way which has led to the same goal a host of others who are in the highest degree satisfied with the road they travelled and who, for them-

selves, prefer it to any other. Such a road is the rule of St. Francis for many a pilgrim desirous of arriving at his eternal destination.

People the country over are longing to see the day when they can ride from coast to coast, and from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada on wide, safe and perfect concrete roads, with every convenience midway as to direction, provisions and comfort. The soul that aims at such a secure and comfortable way from earth to heaven—and this is infinitely more valuable than an automobile road from one point of this world to another—will be sure to find it in the Third Order of St. Francis.

The "Seraphic Highway" aims to describe this road to its readers and to emphasize its signal advantages. The book is made up of discourses preached by the author to tertiary gatherings in retreats, octaves or novenas, and on other occasions. Whilst it is primarily intended for members of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis, it will also be read with interest and profit, so it is fondly hoped, by non-members. The perusal of it may give rise to, or develop, or finally decide many a vocation to the Order of Penance. In some readers it may produce a knowledge of the order that will be valuable for its own sake; in others again it may dispel misconceptions of and prejudices against the order that are uncharitable, unjust and harmful.

Certain Christians at Ephesus, upon being asked if they had received the Holy Ghost, answered St. Paul, that they did not know that there was a Holy Ghost. Being informed regarding the Holy Spirit and His wonderful effects on the soul, they were eager and happy to receive Him. Similarly many good Catholics, when asked if they are members of the Third Order of St. Francis, reply that they did not know there was such an order. Made properly acquainted with it, however, they are desirous and glad to join it.

In places where for some reason tertiaries receive no instructions in, or exhortations regarding the rule these lectures may not unprofitably serve not only for private, but also for public reading at tertiary gatherings, and at least partially supply the absence of the spoken word.

Even Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular, and Religious of every stamp should derive enlightenment, encouragement and stimulation from the reading of these pages; for what is true regarding the religious life in a broad sense, led in the midst of the world, applies in a higher degree and in a larger measure to the religious life in the strict sense, led in the cloister.

Pope Benedict XV, who shortly before his death published one of the most favorable and inspiring encyclicals on the Third Order of St. Francis, used to advert with much gratification

to the fact, that he became a member of the order on the seventh centenary of the birth of St. Francis. May many readers of this book be induced to insure the same satisfying memory and high privilege to themselves by entering the order on the seventh centenary of the death of St. Francis, which will be commemorated throughout the year 1926.

"My, but I am glad I belong to this order!" I once heard a young married man exclaim after he had heard a discourse on the excellence and spiritual profits of the Order of Penance. The author would know of no better or greater reward for his part in writing this book than the realization of a similar impression and effect on every reader of it.

The Author.

Feast of St. Francis,
October 4, 1925.

THE SERAPHIC HIGHWAY

LECTURE I.

Origin and Development

"Behold, I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared" (Exod., 23, 20).

WHOEVER has to undertake a voyage through a strange and distant country, is glad to have an expert and trustworthy guide. Whoever has to cope against dangerous and powerful foes, open and secret, is happy to have a powerful and willing protector. Whoever has some very difficult, yet necessary business to dispatch, heartily welcomes an able and faithful adviser. All these services were nicely and effectively rendered, so the Bible tells us, by the archangel Raphael on behalf of Tobias, a virtuous young man in olden times.

St. Francis, Another St. Raphael

To St. Raphael our holy father St. Francis had a great devotion. Well he might, for was he himself not designed by God as the heavenly guide to thousands and hundreds of thousands of God-loving men and women on their perilous pilgrimage in quest of salvation through an unknown country, full of insidious and mighty

enemies? In the breviary St. Francis is styled "leader and conductor" to heaven. He has won this title gloriously by leading countless hosts of faithful followers to eternal bliss and glory. In order that we, too, may profit by his wondrous leadership, by yielding to it readily and consistently, we are now to engage in this holy retreat.

"Is Anyone Going My Way?"

There are automobiles which carry on their windshields in large letters the friendly invitation: "Is anyone going my way?" The owner is willing and eager to give a deserving party a "lift".

For seven hundred years St. Francis has extended and still extends the same invitation to everyone saying: "Is anyone going my way to Jesus Crucified? Let him or her come with me, and I assure them that they will achieve their aim."

A Threefold Purpose

A retreat, triduum or novena in the interest of the Third Order of St. Francis is intended for three classes of people. Its first purpose is to revive, refresh and increase the fervor of the members of the order, to heighten their appreciation and quicken their love of the seraphic life, and to strengthen and intensify their striving after its sublime ideals of perfection and holiness.

Secondly, by prudently exhibiting the great advantages and substantial privileges and spiritual profits there are in the faithful wearing of the scapular and cord of St. Francis of Assisi, the retreat aims to draw new members into the order and make them the beneficiaries of its valuable benefits. The third object of the retreat is to acquaint all well-meaning Catholics, whether they contemplate becoming members of it or not, with the real nature and the true scope of the Third Order. It has been and is so big and important an organization in the Church of the past as well as of the present time, that every educated Catholic ought to welcome the occasion to learn what it really is and what it stands for. Especially since even in Catholic circles there are abroad so many misconceptions and prejudices regarding the order, it must interest the sincere Catholic to get a thorough and reliable knowledge of it.

Our Father, St. Francis, Is With Us

In the chronicles of the First Order of St. Francis we read, that several years after the death of the saint, while the friars were assembled in chapter, Francis suddenly appeared visibly in their midst to indicate, that in spirit he was always with them when they gathered for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In this retreat, my dear friends, we are assembled for the same purpose: hence we can be sure that our

holy father St. Francis is with us and is pleading our cause insistently with God. There is much consolation and encouragement in this thought and reflection.

"The Finger of God Is Here"

The Third Order of St. Francis is over 700 years old. In 1921 was celebrated the seventh centenary of its foundation. This alone is evidence enough that it is God's work. To it may be applied the words of the wise Gamaliel regarding Christianity: "If this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, you can not overthrow it" (Acts, 5, 38, 39). For an institution of unworldliness, penance, humility and mortification to continue to exist so long a period, in the face of the violent antagonism of the world, the flesh and the devil, and after seven hundred years to be as youthful, vigorous, active and promising as it was in the first years of its origin: this is in itself an obvious proof that "the finger of God is here".

A God-Given Leader of Men

As is well known, the founder of the Third Order is St. Francis of Assisi. In his youth Francis rather ardently pursued the joys, pleasures and honors of the world; not in a low and vicious manner, yet with considerable warmth and eagerness. He was very popular among the young element in Assisi and vicinity. He was of a

prepossessing appearance, pleasing of address, gay and winning of manner, a sweet singer, a clever dancer, a romantic poet, a congenial and sympathetic companion: in a word, his was a charming and controlling personality; he was a born leader. He was the acknowledged captain and protagonist in the sports, entertainments and pastimes of young Umbria in his day.

"I Am Born for Higher Things"

It was not long, however, when, as he grew older and his mind and heart became more mature, the sports of youth and the merry-making, fun and mirth of social life appeared empty and unsatisfying to him. He felt he was made for higher things. He aspired after something less perishable than momentary joys and fleeting pleasures. He craved for fame and immortality. Nothing seemed to promise him more of these than the military career. He felt if he became a great soldier, general and conqueror, his name would be emblazoned upon the pages of history in golden and unerasable letters.

The Soldier of Christ

Francis therefore became a warrior and entered the lists for his native city against its rival city Perugia. He was not fortunate on the battle-field, however, for in one of the first engagements with the enemy he was taken prisoner. He was

thrown into a damp and dingy prison, and was given ample time to ponder on the fickleness and unreliableness of earthly glory. When he was released from the dungeon he was a changed man. To fight for earthly laurels and for a human captain no longer appealed to him. He realized if he was to achieve substantial and everlasting fame he would have to become a warrior of the King of kings, the immortal and invincible King of all times, Jesus Christ, his Lord. He then and there decided that Jesus would have all the loyalty of his heart, all the consecration of his mind, and all the ardor and devotion of his impetuous and romantic nature. This whole-souled decision he carried out to the limit of his powers and to the end of his earthly sojourn.

The Fool of Christ

The associates of his former frolics marvelled at the change Francis had undergone. He was not the same. They could not understand or account for his new view and manner of life. Some thought he was losing his mind, so strange did his actions appear. Boys in the streets began to fling mud at him as though he were a fool. But soon it became apparent that, if Francis had become a fool, it was merely to be wise with Christ; that the spirit of God possessed him in a high degree; and that he was obviously on the

straight and safe and short way to heaven, and to a very high and enviable place in heaven.

"He That Shall Lose His Life for Me, Shall Find It"

He suddenly began to exercise his old personal charm and power of leadership over those around and about him; but instead of engaging them in the pursuits of earthly pleasures, he now whetted their appetites for the joys of the spirit and the thrills of heaven. He taught them to seek and find their highest happiness in the dismissal of, and the entire abstention from the very things which they had previously considered to be of the very essence of human bliss, and which they had accordingly coveted with passionate ambition. By his example more than by his words he soon beguiled them to prefer poverty to riches, lowliness to glory, and the rigor of self-denial to the softness of pleasure. He showed them by his own behavior how, after the words of Christ, they were to find their souls by losing them, and how they could practice the highest and most profitable self-love by the severest and most unrelenting self-hatred.

Five Hundred Recruits a Year

The extent and intensity of his magnetic influence may be gauged from the fact, that ten years after the foundation of his so-called First

Order, or the Order of Friars Minor, over five thousand men and young men, of all classes and professions of society, had aligned themselves with him in a life of extreme unworldliness and personal austerities. Lured by the heavenly spirit and heroic conduct of Francis one renounced a lucrative business, another a prosperous farm, still another a promising professional practice in the world in order to give themselves unreservedly to God and the salvation of their immortal souls after the manner of their leader, the Little Poor Man of Assisi. And soon very many of them approached and resembled him not only in their external habit and demeanor, but also in their love of and closeness to God, in their passionate attachment to Jesus Christ Crucified and in the sublime heroism of their lives. It was a marvelous and inspiring sight: a real and powerful sensation that arrested the observation and wonder of men.

The Women Grow Jealous

Not only the men and young men but also the women and maidens felt upon them the celestial spell of Francis and his holy life. They were jealous of him and his companions for loving God and taking heaven by storm as they were plainly doing. The high places in heaven were not all to be captured by men, the women decided. One day a very beautiful and noble young lady of about eighteen years approached Francis with

the prayer to allow her and her associates to embrace the life he was leading and to serve God exactly after his manner. The saint readily acquiesced and, by clothing Clare of Assisi with the sackcloth of penance in exchange for her rich and soft garments, he became the founder of the Second Order, or the Order of Poor Clares. This, too, spread very rapidly and, owing to the fame and influence of the personality of Francis, it soon drew into its increasing nunneries ladies from the highest as well as the poorest classes of society.

If You Can Not Go to the Convent, the Convent Will Come to You

Married people, beholding this entrancing spectacle of a high religious revival and of great spiritual heroism on the part of countless men and women, making the hardest sacrifices with alacrity and joy for Jesus Christ Crucified on behalf of their immortal souls, were inflamed with a burning desire to follow their example; so much so that they petitioned Francis to permit them, in spite of their marriage vows, to renounce the world completely and forever and shut themselves up in cloisters to lead a life for God alone. Francis instructed them, that it was too late for them to espouse the strict religious life, since they had already contracted anterior and very sacred

obligations to which it was their duty to conform to the end. But he comforted them not a little by assuring them that, since they could no longer enter the convent, he would bring the convent to them by transforming their homes into convents, and by rendering it possible for them to live lives of religious consecration and consistent unworldliness in the very midst of the world, its business occupations and distractions. He kept his word by instituting the Third Order, or the Order of Penance, as he styled it.

No Beggar Too Mean, No King Too Great: No Sinner Too Vile, No Saint Too Holy

Because of its more comprehensive scope the Third Order grew even more swiftly and extensively than the First and Second Orders. It gave shelter to every man or woman of good will, and offered them the opportunity to serve God after the style of His great servant, Francis of Assisi, and thereby to obtain in a high degree peace and contentment of mind in this life, and a splendid throne in heaven. For the meanest beggar the order was not too high, nor was it too low for the most mighty king; it excluded no sinner, however vile, provided he was minded to give up sin and do penance for it, and it made room for the greatest saint and promised him an increase in grace, holiness and glory.

He Became All to All Men

Such then was the influence of Francis over men. He was partial to none and excluded none when there was question of loving God and saving souls. With another great lover of Jesus Crucified, St. Paul, the apostle, (1 Cor., 9, 22,) he became all things to all men to save all for Christ. As his divine Model he went about doing good indiscriminately to all to win all for heaven. Few saints have exerted so wide and so wholesome an influence on mankind towards salvation as Francis wielded and still wields. Far from being dead his power over all classes of men and women is now as vast and as deep and as productive of good results as it has ever been.

His Influence Does Not Wane

Today, after seven hundred years since their inception, the First Order, the Order of Friars, in the three families of Friars Minor, Conventuals and Capuchins, numbers about thirty thousand members; the Second Order, the Order of Poor Clares of the strictest enclosure, has between seven and eight thousand nuns; the Third Order Regular, comprising priests, Brothers and Sisters living in community, in its various branches counts about fifty thousand members; the Third Order Secular numbers between two and three million members. All of these men and women, of all nations and climes, of all ages and conditions

of life, of all classes and professions of society, look upon St. Francis of Assisi as their leader and pattern; they are inspired by his ideals and are guided by his maxims of the love of the Crucified One and of the contempt of the world and of self. His benign influence is so potent that it even extends beyond the pale of the Church in instilling the love of the good, the beautiful and the true into the hearts of men. Next to St. Paul no saint is known to exert so strong an attraction and to wield so great a power on non-Catholics as the Little Poor Man of Assisi.

Why St. Francis?

What accounts for this choice of St. Francis as a leader on the part of so many noble men and women in the past and in the present? Why is he preferred to so many other saints? What explains the wondrous and lasting spell of his personality, and the magic power of his influence on souls?

True Love Knows No Bounds

The reasons are many and various. His ideal, romantic, generous and whole-souled nature has a strong appeal. After he turned to Jesus Crucified as his Lord and Master his devotion knew neither reserve nor bounds. His consecration was final and entire. There was no bargaining, no halting, no dilly-dallying. In the way of true love the sacrifice of Francis was

complete and heroic. There is a certain magnetism about such unwavering and unqualified and unconditional love and dedication. Even if they can not reach it, God-loving people admire and ambition it. Hence the large following of Francis among religious men and women. In its best sense the well-known adage, "All the world loves a lover" has been verified in the case of Francis. He was the lover of God par excellence, and of men and of nature, too.

Brother Joy

Moreover, notwithstanding the great austerity of his life and his complete alienation from the world, or, rather, because of them, Francis always possessed and continually exhibited the most joyous spirit and happy temper. His whole appearance breathed and radiated peace, contentment and bliss. He was known as Brother Joy, or the Ever-Glad. There was nothing gloomy, sad, depressing or forbidding in his make-up or behavior. Whenever high piety is associated with unfailing good cheer, and great sanctity is joined to a peculiar sweetness and joviality of manner, the charm of it all becomes irresistible to normal people of pious tendencies. Hence the persistent popularity of St. Francis.

There Was No Guile in Him

Again, the simplicity of Francis, which may be said to have been a compound of unconscious

humility, childlike candor and faith, and a large charity, is an irrepressible invitation to admiration, attachment and love. To him the words of Jesus apply: "Behold . . . in whom there is no guile!" (John, 1, 47.)

A Protestant's View of Francis

In his characteristic manner Addison, the English writer, in one of his essays tells a story illustrating the holy simplicity of Francis. As coming from a rather bigoted and cynical Protestant it may give a clue to some of the curious reverence non-Catholics have for Francis.

One evening near dusk, so the story runs, St. Francis was walking along the streets of Assisi in company with another friar, when they presently noticed two young lovers in a nook of the way exchanging endearments and caresses in a rather fervent manner. "O Brother!" St. Francis exclaimed as he saw the spectacle, "let us thank God, that there is still some charity in the world!" In his simplicity, the author explains, Francis mistook the ardor of amorous expression for the glow of Christian charity. The "Fioretti" or "Little Flowers" do not bring this story. But the fact is, Francis was as ingenious in putting a charitable construction on the actions of others, as he was resourceful in finding reasons to censure himself.

Love Begets Resemblance

Furthermore, when a saint is chosen as a model it is always with the purpose of being led close to Jesus Christ, the archetype of genuine saintliness. The closer, then, a saint promises to lead his votaries to Jesus, and the better copies he can make them to be of Jesus, the more his leadership will be in demand among the aspirants for holiness. Since the time of the apostles no saint got closer to, or became a truer and more lifelike copy of Jesus Christ than St. Francis. How much he resembled our Lord, Jesus Himself demonstrated to the world in the most graphic, expressive and authentic manner when He designed to imprint His own sacred wounds upon the body of Francis, thus rendering him, as it were, a living photograph, a distinct replica, a seraphic duplicate of Himself. This was a solemn invitation to all Christians to walk in the way of Francis if they wanted to reach their one desire, the Crucified One on Calvary. This accounts perhaps more than anything else for the unceasing drawing power of Francis throughout the ages. He clearly displays upon himself the visible seal of Him Who promised, when lifted up, He would draw all things unto Himself. The magnetic power of Francis is merely intermediary and relative. It has its origin and support from the irresistible Wooer of souls on the Cross of Calvary.

He Has Landed Many in Glory

Finally, after a man has led hosts of others to the highest eminence of success, in the most various walks of life, and in the face of apparently insuperable odds, he gains a strong and valuable prestige for able leadership, and followers look to him spontaneously for inspiration and direction. Almost a hundred members of the Third Order have been formally declared blessed or saints by the Church. About a hundred others have been pronounced venerable, inasmuch as the cause of their beatification is under way with the approval of the Church. Where so many have admittedly attained the acme of sanctity—and among them hardly an honorable condition or state of life is unrepresented—there is reason to suppose that innumerable others have also climbed the mountain of perfection and achieved salvation unnoticed, unknown and unsung. This multitude of saved ones under the same efficient leadership induces so many others who are eager for salvation to enlist under the colors of so valiant a champion and so trustworthy a leader.

Francis Sees Them Into Heaven

The physician, who is an expert obstetrician, and who is known never to have lost or bungled a case, is very much in demand on the part of expectant mothers, who desire that their offspring be ushered into this world hale and hearty.

Yet, momentous as is man's entrance into this life, it is infinitely more important to be ushered into eternity spiritually safe and secure. After having succeeded in leading countless hosts of the Church's children nicely and gloriously into the highest realms of paradise, it is no wonder Francis is in demand for the performance of the same angelic office on behalf of innumerable others.

Why Are Popes Tertiaries?

Ten or more popes have been members of the Third Order of St. Francis. If anyone knows the way to heaven and is interested to choose the best and surest way for himself, it is the shepherd of the flock, the vicar of Christ, the pope. What motive can a pope have in joining and belonging to this order? No other motive than any other member of it. The pope has in mind two things: first, he wants to make as sure as he can that he is going to heaven: and second, he wants to get as high a place in heaven as possible. Realizing that the Third Order is a powerful help towards accomplishing both these objects, a number of popes were glad and proud to be members of it.

Five in a Row

The last five popes have been fervent adherents of the Order of Penance. Pius IX was a member of it for over fifty years. Pope Leo XIII was not

only a member, but also the greatest patron of the order since the pope who confirmed it in the beginning. Pius X, of saintly memory, was an ardent son of St. Francis. Benedict XV, mentioning with pride the fact that he had the privilege to join the order on the occasion of the seventh centenary of the birth of St. Francis, published one of the most eloquent and generous encyclicals in favor of the order, in which he stated that he should like to see it introduced in every city, hamlet and parish of the world, not merely sporadically and individually, but corporately and on a large scale, inasmuch as entire societies should join it as one man. Pius XI, gloriously reigning, has also expressed his gratification at having entered the Third Order years ago; and he has warmly reconfirmed the splendid eulogies and recommendations of the order on the part of his predecessors.

Why Not Follow Suit?

If, then, the head of the Church considers it so high a privilege and so great a grace to have St. Francis as his teacher, leader and guide on the way of salvation, why should you not appreciate this lofty distinction in a similar degree, if you possess it, or strive eagerly after it, in case you are not yet a member of the order? Let Francis be to you what the archangel Raphael was to Tobias: a safe and sympathetic guide through a

foreign country —we are all pilgrims in this valley of tears—a reliable protection against the devil and his wily attacks, and a powerful escort to your eternal home. Amen.

LECTURE II.

Why People Join the Third Order

"It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God" (Ps. 72, 28).

THE Third Order of St. Francis is a religious order in the true, though in a wide, sense of the word. Strictly speaking it is not an order in the same degree as is that of the religious men and women who live in community and profess vows; but in a broad sense it contains those elements that we find in a religious order, namely: a rule of life, a superior or director, a religious garb, the daily divine office, the novitiate and the profession. It is therefore not merely a pious sodality, league or confraternity, but in reality, as Leo XIII has expressly declared, a religious order. Its members are consequently Religious really and truly. Their homes, provided they are faithful followers of St. Francis, are in a figurative sense transformed into convents. Hence the Church decrees, that in solemn public processions the tertiaries are to rank immediately after the members of the strictly religious organizations of Brothers or Sisters, and ahead of all pious associations of lay persons.

The Great Pope of Christian Social Reform

Leo XIII took occasion to make the aforesaid declaration regarding the status of the order after

he had mitigated its rule and manner of life. He was and is known as the Pope of Christian Social Reform. He considered the Third Order of St. Francis as one of the best and most potent factors of genuine social reform. Previously to being elevated to the papacy he had had a thorough and intimate acquaintance with the Third Order and its value towards the personal holiness of its members. Being a man of a clear, wide, and far-seeing vision, he realized that the order in its ancient rigor, with its many prayers, its days of fast and abstinence, and its austere alienation from all worldly pleasures, even the innocent and harmless ones, would hardly appeal to the masses of Christians. And yet they were the very ones he planned to reform by means of the Third Order. He therefore moderated the rule and life of the order to a degree as to render its demands acceptable and easy of fulfilment to every well-intentioned Christian who was desirous of saving his soul. At the same time the pope declared, that the essence of the order had not been tampered with through the mitigation, and that its members were in reality Religious.

The Order Is Not Too Strict

The prejudice which prevails in many quarters anent the great austerity of the Third Order dates back to the times of its ancient rule. Today this prejudice has no foundation whatever for, as was

mentioned above, the present rule is so mild and liberal that everyone who aims to go to heaven will find no difficulty in its observance. The rule does not bind in conscience. To neglect its precepts or to disregard its inhibitions is not of itself a sin, unless the matter falls under the general Christian law binding under sin. Any member may leave the Third Order, either in the novitiate or after the profession, without any ceremony or formality, and without committing a sin. If later on he desires to return to the order again, no matter how long he was intentionally or practically away from it, he needs but to resume the scapular and cord and the practice of the rule to be made a member once more, for here the principle prevails: Once a tertiary, always a tertiary. I mention this to show that a candidate has everything to gain and nothing to lose in becoming a member of the order. He can at least give it a trial; but it must be a sincere and earnest trial, for the order is too holy an institution to be trifled with.

The Test Year

The novitiate is purposely set apart for this mutual trial between the order and the candidate. The order observes and measures the candidate to see if he be a desirable member, worthy to be admitted to profession and full membership. On his part the postulant tries out the order and its

rule of life. If he likes it and finds that it appeals to his spiritual nature, advances him in piety and virtue, and brings him closer to God and to heaven, he will make his profession when the year of the novitiate is over, and he thereby becomes a full-fledged member. If, on the contrary, he ascertains that the seraphic life does not fall in with his individual temperament: it creates in him no enthusiasm for the higher life, nor does it estrange him effectively from the world, neither does it noticeably fan within him the love of God and charity for his neighbors: in a word it is not to him a spiritual impulse and a religious urge, but rather leaves him torpid, listless and indifferent; it is apparent that the Third Order is not for him, and he will do no wrong in quitting it and in dismissing its uniform.

The Order Will Not Disappoint Him

Yet if he gives the order a fair chance and a sincere test, there will hardly ever be an instance of disappointment with the Franciscan life on the part of the candidate. His expectations regarding it will not only be fully met, but they will be exceeded by the wealth of new spiritual experience and religious impetus with which it will provide him; and far from being dissatisfied with the order, he will grow more fond of and attached to it, the longer he is one of its privileged members.

There are instances of people wilfully leaving the order after having been enrolled in it for some time; but they are often such as entered it indeliberately, even light-heartedly and frivolously, without a serious appreciation of its high spiritual values, and without any earnest desire or sincere effort to turn them to account. In the Third Order, too, in the experience of all genuine and loyal aspirants are verified the rapturous words of the Psalmist (Ps. 83, 5, 11): "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord: they shall praise Thee forever and ever. For better is one day in Thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners."

Money Is No Consideration

Money plays no part in the membership of the Third Order. There is no initiation fee, neither are there any regular dues. At the monthly meeting a collection of voluntary offerings is taken up, when each member contributes what he pleases to a common fund which is used for purposes of the order: for the poor and needy, for alms for Masses for the living and deceased members, and also for other objects of charity, piety and religion. Otherwise money has no role in the order. The order aims not at your purse but at your soul. Its chief purpose is your personal holiness and continual progress in

perfection. All its other activities are subordinate and subsidiary to this its main and primary object.

A Thousand Recruits a Year

If a personal insertion will not be out of place I wish to say, that in the last six years (1919-1925), as provincial commissary of the Third Order, I have had the high privilege and great pleasure personally to receive in the order from five to six thousand members. Among them all I have not heard of one who regretted having joined the army of St. Francis of Assisi; but almost after every solemn enrolment there were a number of persons who deplored the fact that they had allowed themselves by flimsy reasons to be restrained from following the desire for a higher spiritual life, and from joining the noble band of the enthusiastic lovers of the Crucified One in the wake of the Little Poor Man of Assisi, than whom no one got closer or clung more lovingly to Jesus on the Cross.

Personal Observations

It may be of interest if I now, from my own experience and observation, mention the classes of people that are attracted to the Third Order, as well as the motives by which they are actuated to affiliate with it. By way of preface I ought perhaps to mention, that only two conditions are required in a Catholic aspirant for membership in

the Third Order, to wit: he must have attained the age of fourteen years, and he must have a sincere will to go to heaven under the direction of the Little Poor Man and his rule.

These conditions being verified, no matter what life he may have led and what manner of person he may have been, there is nothing to hinder him from being a fervent and most successful follower of St. Francis of Assisi. However, one may not be a member of more than one Third Order. Nor may Religious, strictly so called, be members of a Third Order Secular.

A Guard to Baptismal Innocence

There are many boys and girls, then, who are barely of age, to ask eagerly for the habit of St. Francis. They are good, pious and eminently virtuous. They have preserved their baptismal innocence untarnished. They want to keep it thus as long as they live. To do this they feel they need powerful protection and a close safeguard. Hearing of the wonderful institution of St. Francis, they instinctively get the conviction that the order was intended for them to keep them near to God and away from sin always. They are not disappointed in their expectations. By and by the spirit of the order gives them various experiences of piety to which they had been strangers before, and a taste of the presence of God similar in its heavenly thrills to the ecstacy

of Francis on Mt. La Verna, and they exclaim in their youthful and enthusiastic hearts: "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God" (Ps. 72, 28). And the older they get in the order the more they are convinced of the truth of the words: "It is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth" (Lam., 3, 27).

The Order of Penance

In direct contrast to them there are many sinners of all ages who have had sad and sorry records of moral weaknesses and criminal lapses. Their consciences are cruelly torn with keen and bitter remorse, and their hearts are heavy with a lurid burden of tremendous guilt. They feel they have much to atone for and need strong support, if they are going to propitiate fully an angry God. They hear of the Order of Penance. The word rings soft, soothing and inviting in their ears, and strikes a responsive and ready cord in their hearts. Penance is their first and main need. It is the most imperative want of their being. Without it true peace of mind will be out of question, and there can be no thought of contentment and happiness. They join the order desiringly and gratefully. The garb of penitence feels good and comfortable. The life of steady though easy penance prescribed by the rule grows sweeter to them from day to day. They feel at

home in the order and have only one prayer in their hearts and on their lips: "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" (Ps. 26, 4). They experience the full meaning of our Lord's sweet words: "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matt., 9, 13).

Preparing for Higher Things

Persons who sense a vocation to the convent or the priesthood, but are hindered from following it immediately, find a grateful refuge in the Third Order of St. Francis. It not only sustains and nurses the sublime call within them, but it also serves as a preparatory stage for the higher life which they are contemplating.

There are many, too, in whom the aforesaid vocation is not yet very distinct or prefectly developed. They are in a maze as to their future and the life which God expects of them. They do the best they can for the time being and become Religious in the world to probe their mind and hearts with regard to complete consecration to God. Ere long what was dark within them grows light; what was blurred grows clear; hesitation makes room for decision, doubt and fear give way to rest and peace of soul. In generosity God is not outclassed. Because they undertook something superogatory for love of Him, He calls them to His own home, the convent, or to His

sanctuary and holy altar. Many such a vocation has been and is now brought to a head through membership in the Third Order.

Were They But Called

There are many persons, too, who would be very happy if they were called to the strictly religious or priestly life. But they are not called. Hostile circumstances hinder them from embracing so sublime a profession. But they will not be foiled in their desire to serve God with all the consecration possible to them in their actual conditions. Hence they are thankful for the opportunity to enter a religious order in the world with the promise, confirmed by the example of many saints in situations similar to their own, of being helped to the highest reaches of holiness. They ask for the habit of the Seraphic Father, and are soon tutored by him in the most lofty secrets of the love of the Crucified One and its ravishing transports and delights.

They Make Amends

Nor are there wanting those who at one period of their lives felt an unmistakable call to the higher life of the cloister or the sanctuary. Thoughtlessly and ungratefully they neglected it. Now it is no longer there, or, if it were, they would be barred by their condition in life from complying with it. They feel guilty. They are ready

to make what amends they can. The Third Order strikes them as a welcome safety valve for their remorseful souls. It gives them the opportunity to show how much they would love God, how wholeheartedly they would serve Him and how cheerfully they would suffer for Him, if they could live in His house or spend themselves in His sanctuary. The Third Order sets no bounds to their spirit of self-denial, and gives them every sphere for the exertion of their zeal for God's glory and the salvation of souls. They find it to be an excellent sub-study for the life they had been invited to, but which through their own fault they forewent.

A Holy Courtship

Many young people who are in the interesting, and, in a way, dangerous period of courtship align themselves eagerly with the great St. Francis. They are wooing and being wooed in innocence, virtue and honor. They realize how very sacred and momentous is the sacrament of matrimony to which they are aspiring, and how holy and sinless must therefore be the delicate season that leads up to it. For this reason they are minded to keep their courtship on a high and honorable plane, and never to allow it to degenerate to a sordid and filthy expression of uncontrolled and unholy passion. They feel the weakness of the flesh and the impassioned urge of nature. They know they

need much and continual strength to persevere in their high and holy resolve. They hear of the Third Order of St. Francis, the poet of divine love, and one of its most chivalrous possessors. They are attracted by his charms to follow in his footsteps of self-control and self-repression. In his magic habit they find an impenetrable shield against carnal temptations and a trusty protector of unsullied purity and spotless innocence. They could not choose a better and more potent way to insure for themselves the blessings of God upon their prospective union.

A Happy Marriage

Married people who aim to lead a life of God feel a natural attraction to the Third Order of St. Francis. The idea of converting their happy home into a house of God or a convent contains for them a forcible appeal. To wear the uniform of so great a friend of God, to pray the daily office together even as the friars and nuns do it in cloisters, is to them an object of holy joy and laudable pride. They are well matched and happily married. They want their mutual love and conjugal harmony and happiness to continue unabated to the end of their lives. They are aware that the only guarantee for this continuance against the feebleness and fickleness of nature is their being and remaining grounded in the fear of the Lord. Membership in the great hosts of the

sons and daughters of St. Francis promises them a lasting support in the fear of God. Hence their eagerness in donning his sacred uniform and their tenacity in wearing it. Neither are they ever disappointed.

Salvation from Misery

On the other hand there are Catholic married people aplenty who are mismated. Their married life is nothing but wretchedness and misery. They are no longer themselves. Their souls are out of joint, and hence they are continually ill at ease. They sigh for relief, but they see no escape from the tortures of incompatibility of temperament and uncongeniality of disposition. The more secret the pain, the harder it is to bear. They hear of the humble St. Francis and his order. It begets in them an inclination to try it out. It may contain some hidden balm for their hearts' festering wounds. They are clothed with the scapular and the cord, the emblems of humility and mortification. Presently they begin to see themselves and each other in a different light, and they conceive quite another idea of marriage and its happiness.

Indifference Makes Room for Love

In the first place they no longer look for complete happiness in this life. God intended this earth to be a valley of tears. From the start

they learn to resign themselves to a certain degree of suffering for the love of God; and even if this suffering strikes them in their most sensitive part, the desire and want of perfect marital union and love, they are willing to endure it in silent conformity to God's holy will. Growing humble of mind after the manner of Francis, they begin to find the fault of their conjugal troubles not so much in the other party, as they had been wont to do, but in themselves; and they set about to correct it. Soon what appeared to be an incurable disagreement and estrangement between the two shows obvious signs of healing; the distance is bridged over by mutual approach and concessions, and the former coldness is dispelled by a sweet, refreshing and ever-growing reciprocal warmth of sentiment and love. This psyschological change is not an uncommon feat for the missionary of love, St. Francis of Assisi.

They Want Children for God

There are also numerous pious married people who have one fond, eager and holy ambition: to have one or more children called to the priesthood, brotherhood or sisterhood. They cherish the true conviction, that for them such a child or such children will be a valuable asset when their life's accounts are audited by Jesus Christ in judgment. In order that this ardent desire of their hearts may be fulfilled, the pious couples league themselves

under the banner of St. Francis with the hope that, by practicing the religious life personally in as far as their circumstances will permit, they may procure for their children the heavenly germs for the still higher life of the convent or the sanctuary.

God Has Been Good to Them

From sheer gratitude many people become members of the Third Order of St. Francis. God has spared them. In the late murderous war their sons had to go overseas, where many a young man fell on the bloody battle-field, and where many another was wounded, or rendered an invalid for life, in body or soul, or in both: but their boys came back to them unharmed bodily and spiritually. Later on when the epidemic, the influenza, killed more people than the war, and decimated families throughout the land, their homes were again left intact. In other ways, too, they prosper and progress nicely and comfortably. For all this they feel they are beholden entirely to their Father in heaven, the Giver of every good. Since His gifts have been real and concrete, they want their gratitude to be actual and solid also. To make sure that it will be so, they join the religious order of St. Francis and wear his sacred habit, and keep his holy rule unto the end of their days.

The Hand of God Chastises Them

But others have not been so fortunate. Their lot is just the reverse. They have been hard stricken. The hand of the Lord has lain and still lies heavy upon them. They have suffered one misfortune after the other, and the end is not yet. A dear and devoted spouse, or a lovely and promising child was cruelly torn from them by grim death. The vacant chair in their onetime happy home stares them in the face with unmitigated coldness and loneliness. Their hearts still bleed as in the first moment of their affliction.

They get acquainted with the Order of Penance. It appeals to them from the start. Its very name sounds as though it offered them a haven of consolation in their severe trials. They are going to enter this order and bear their sufferings in the spirit of penance. Following faithfully in the footsteps of the hero of Assisi they get closer and closer to Jesus Crucified; and the closer they get to His Cross, the sweeter and dearer their own cross becomes: until, far from wishing to be delivered from it or groaning under it, they cry out ecstatically with St. Francis in the glowing words of St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal., 6, 14).

The Virtuous Rich Like the Order

Although worldly riches are known to be one of the most insidious, dangerous, and powerful snares by which the devil draws souls away from God and salvation, there are still many Christians of great affluence and wealth who do not bend their knees to Mammon, nor do they allow their hearts to fall in love with the gold they possess. To keep their souls free and unencumbered by the vain and fickle goods of this earth, many of them hie themselves to St. Francis, begging for the potent shield of his uniform, as the emblem of his and their love of poverty and hatred of this world. His spirit and example render the glittering coin of Mammon less attractive and more contemptible to them from day to day. They sense the sweetness of our Savior's beautiful words with which He began His first sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt., 5, 3). And from day to day they are more and more actuated by His other words: "It is a more blessed thing to give rather than to receive" (Acts, 20, 35).

The Poor Feel at Home in the Order

On the other hand those who are poor in reality, and have barely enough of this world's goods to eke out a precarious existence, derive the sweetest consolation and abiding comfort and strength from their association with St. Francis, the Little

Poor Man of Christ, and from the wearing of his humble garb. Through his inspiration poverty begins to lose its horror in their eyes, and assumes a charm that renders it lovable and desirable, for it promises them, in case they embrace it with resignation and patience, that it will bring them, as it did St. Francis, closer to Jesus Crucified day for day, and make them resemble Him more and more on this earth as an earnest of their likeness to Him in Heaven after the short and rapid struggle of life is over. They, too, though differently from the rich aforesaid, experience a thrill at the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" Having nothing, as St. Paul says, they possess all things (2 Cor., 6, 10), and are far happier even in this life than the very rich who seek their hearts' contentment in earthly possessions.

On the Brink of the Grave

In the beginning of this discourse I referred to the crowds of very young people who join the Seraphic Order no sooner they attain the required age. But there are also a number of very old people who in the very dusk of life, shortly before they are bidden into eternity, assume the garb of the Poor Man of Assisi. On the very brink of the grave they grasp this strong support of the soul's eternal insurance, and they feel much consoled in being privileged to appear in the safe

livery of St. Francis before the judgment seat of God. God is very good to them. He calls them at the eleventh hour and, because of the intensity of their gratitude for so great a grace and their close compliance with the rule in all its details, He will no doubt reward them as amply as many others who were members of the order for life, but who did not take the same pains to exploit its signal advantages.

The Dominant Note

All the motives I have mentioned as factors in the enrolment of new members in the army of tertiaries may be summed up, however, in this one which always predominates over all, namely: I want to save my soul! "For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt., 16, 26.) In consequence of the heavenly motive power of this utterance of our Lord, the One Expert on salvation, St. Francis sees the realization of the vision, in which Jesus promised him, that his order would be like a tree, expanding gradually over all the world, and lasting to the end of time, administering generously the benefits of salvation, in the way of spiritual refreshment, relief, nourishment and vitality to countless people of all nations and climes, of every race and color, of every class and profession, without distinction, or limit, or measure. Amen.

LECTURE III.

The Tertiary's Obligations

PART ONE

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (Ps. 118, 105).

OUR Lord "Jesus, the author and finisher of faith" (Hebr., 12, 2), the architect and builder of our salvation, gives all those who strive after holiness this very plain and sensible advice: "For which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down, and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it: lest, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build, and was not able to finish?" (Luke, 14, 28, 29.)

Weigh the Costs and Profits

Whoever, therefore, contemplates entrance into the Third Order of St. Francis, will prudently weigh beforehand the obligations and demands of the order, together with its profits and benefits, with a view of learning if he will be able to lead the life it prescribes and thereby gain the advantages it promises. Consequently it will now be timely to rehearse the duties the rule of the

Order of Penance imposes upon its members, to convey a knowledge of them to the prospective candidates, and to renew their acquaintance in such tertiaries who may have grown more or less oblivious of them. It will be just and meet to correlate the several duties with the corresponding privileges, in order to be able to appraise justly both the burden and the value of membership in the grand army of St. Francis of Assisi.

Things to Remember

Before advancing further it will be good to remember, that the Third Order is a religious order in the true sense of the word; that its rule of its own self does not bind under sin; and that membership in the order can be dropped at any time, in the novitiate or after profession, without sin. And right here it may be added, that the director or visitor of the order have the power, when there is sufficient reason to warrant it, to dispense a member from any obligation of the rule or, respectively, to commute it into some other good work; and that the general absolution, received with the proper disposition of soul, amply atones for whatsoever transgression of the rule; in consequence of which, since the general absolution is conferred so frequently—about thirty-five times a year a sincere tertiary need not be long in arrears in the payment of his spiritual dues to the order, or under heavy

indebtedness with regard to his assumed and professed obligations.

Authorized Reception

It is above all required, to be a member of the Third Order at all, that one be properly received in the order by an authorized minister. I mention this, since it sometimes happens that persons believe they become members by merely putting on the scapular and cord themselves. As well may a girl consider herself a Sister of a certain community of nuns for having privately, without authorization, donned the habit of the order and given herself a new name. Nor is it permissible for anyone to be received in the order by proxy, even as no one is ever received in a strictly religious order by proxy. Nor is it sufficient to have one's name entered into the official register. The reception must be made in person.

The Uniform Must Be Worn

The first duty after the reception is the wearing of the uniform or the habit of the order. This consists of the scapular and cord. Here it may be mentioned, that the obligations of the order will never be found hard or bitter by the tertiary who inures himself to their observance from the beginning of his membership. The novitiate which one makes usually gives the tone and color to the whole religious life which follows. Hence

the importance of being a fervent and conscientious novice, and of contracting and showing a genuine and active love for the habit from the very start.

It Was Large Once

In the first ages of the order the tertiaries wore a long habit similar in length to that of the friars of the First Order. For practical reasons the size of the habit was reduced until soon it merely had the shape of a large scapular, such as some Religious wear above their habit today. Now this tertiary scapular has dwindled down to quite a small shape, so much so that, if it be only as large as the ordinary Mt. Carmel scapular, it is still considered to meet the requirements of the rule; but usually a somewhat larger size is employed.

The Nature of the Scapular

The scapular consists of two pieces of woven brown wool, fastened together by two strings. There need be no picture of St. Francis on the scapular. The strings may be of any material, size, length or color. The scapular must be worn over the shoulders, one part of it in front, and the other on the back. The scapular may be covered by, or enclosed in some other receptacle of whatsoever material, just so it is worn as indicated above. It may be worn either directly on the body or over the nether garments. It must be

worn day and night, unless for a good reason a dispensation has been obtained. When through mere neglect a member does not wear the scapular, for the time being he thereby deprives himself of the privileges of the order. For a reasonable cause to put off the scapular for a short time, say whilst taking a bath in private or while bathing at a public beach, does not imply the forfeiture of the tertiary advantages.

The Medal Is No Substitute

Since the scapular represents the habit of the Third Order, it may not be replaced or supplied by a scapular medal after the manner of the ordinary scapulars. Even as Religious of strict orders would never dream of substituting for their religious garb a medal to be carried, let us say, in secular clothes, so the tertiary, also a Religious, must wear the scapular or the habit in reality.

Why Balk at the Scapular?

In former times, until quite recently, the scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was generally worn by Catholics without demur or complaint. No one found its wearing mentionably hard, disagreeable or uncomfortable. Everyone carried this badge of Mary's children as a matter of course. A few years ago, because of local reasons, the Church permitted the natives of the torrid zone to substitute a medal in place of the scapular.

Suddenly, no doubt more in consequence of our modern fashions than from any other cause, a sort of peevishness and impatience against the wearing of the scapular began to be felt in many quarters. This soon spread to such a degree as to induce the Church, always a considerate and indulgent mother, to make the concession of the scapular medal under given restrictions. But this concession she has not extended to the tertiary scapular for the simple reason, that it represents a religious garb. And if formally all good Catholics found it easy to wear the scapular of Our Lady, why should Catholics aiming at a higher life after the fashion of St. Francis of Assisi entertain misgivings about wearing his uniform in the shape of a small scapular, especially since the wearing of the scapular is to be paralled by the modesty of dress?

The Livery of the Human Seraph

The blessed scapular is the uniform of our holy father, St. Francis. This thought alone ought to render its wearing not only easy, but sweet, agreeable, consoling and joyous. A uniform, as a rule, is a symbol of unreserved devotion and consecration to a cause. The higher and more sacred the cause, the more glorious is the uniform, and the more it entitles its faithful wearer to due respect and homage, and justifies in him a reasonable and holy pride. The uniform of a soldier

of the United States, for instance, marks its wearer as one who, when duty calls, is willing to give his services and his life for the honor and the defence of his country. For this reason the true patriot and worthy citizen heartily esteems and sincerely loves the loyal soldier for the very uniform he has on, and the ideal dedication it bespeaks.

The uniform of St. Francis implies the highest possible consecration, as its wearer is minded and professes to follow, imitate and love Jesus Christ after the manner of St. Francis, namely in the most unselfish and heroic degree. To wear this uniform, then, is in itself a great honor and a high distinction. It not only entitles its sincere carrier to be respected by men, but it also insures him the favor of God.

Esau and Jacob: Francis and You

The episode of Jacob in the Bible illustrates the manner in which the seraphic uniform procures for its wearer the blessing of God. The dying Isaac wanted to bestow his richest benediction upon his elder son Esau. At the suggestion and instigation of Rebecca, his mother, Jacob disguised himself as Esau to his aged and blind father by covering his hands with gloves of the hairy skin of a kid. He thereby obtained the copious and lasting blessing that was intended for his senior brother, and through it he became one

of the forefathers of our Lord. Similarly, when you appear before God in the uniform of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the greatest friends of Jesus Christ, God will not be deceived, indeed, but He will be partial to you from the start and grant you precious favors because of the association your very uniform implies. He will bless you for Francis, as it were.

The Uniform, a Continual Monitor

Again, a uniform is also to its bearer a continual reminder of, and a vigorous stimulant to what is good, noble and high. It recalls to him the ideals of his profession, and his sacred duty to endeavor to attain and remain true to them. Hence the prescription of the tertiary rule to wear the habit always. The scapular is to be to each member an incessant indicator pointing to Francis and his holy life as a source of inspiration, hope and courage or, respectively, of wholesome rebuke, correction and advice. Even as the phylacteries and other emblems, worn by the Jews on their garments, or tied about their arms and foreheads, were always to recall to their minds the law of God: so the scapular of St. Francis, in a good and humble way, is to render it impossible to his true followers ever to forget or lose sight of the way of humility and unworldliness which, in imitation of Christ, he has traced to them as the best way to heaven.

The Cord of St. Francis

What has just been said of the scapular applies with equal force to the cord, for both are parts of one uniform. The cord may be of wool, cotton, hemp or flax. It may be of any color, although it is usually white. It is sufficient, if it has the thickness of the so-called carpenter's or chalk line. It may be single or double, and may be worn either immediately over the body or over the undergarments. The knots are not prescribed. Some use five knots in their cords in honor of the five wounds of our Savior; others have three in theirs in honor of the Most Holy Trinity.

The scapular and cord given to the candidate at the reception are blessed by the priest before the enrolment. After being received in the order the tertiary blesses each new scapular and cord by the very wearing of them; hence they require no special blessing by the priest. It is advisable for each member of the order to have a number of scapulars and cords for the purpose of cleanliness, and in order never to be without a habit in case of loss or destruction of the used one.

A Missioner of Christ

It must be admitted, that there is some inconvenience in wearing the seraphic cord, just as there is a degree of discomfort in carrying the scapular. But here again there is much relief

and solace and joy in the reflection that the cord of St. Francis represents the bands of love fastening us to Jesus Christ and His service. The great St. Paul found his highest glory and his sweetest satisfaction in being a captive of Jesus Christ. As long as a tertiary remains faithful to the lowly cord of Francis there will be no danger of his estrangement from Him Who is the way, the truth and the life. Even as Jesus permitted Himself to be fastened by ropes to the pillar to be scourged for us, so we must be happy to be fastened by the seraphic cord, as it were, to a life of penance for the love of Him.

The Divine Office

After the wearing of the uniform the next duty of a member of the Third Order of St. Francis is the recitation of the divine office. All religious orders have the divine office or breviary as the main item of their daily program. Tertiaries, being Religious in the true sense of the word, must therefore consider their daily office as one of their most important and pressing occupations. Their office consists of twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorys each day. These must be said in addition to prayers rendered obligatory through other factors, such as vows, for instance.

But the twelve Our Fathers can be made to serve, if the tertiary so desires, as morning, evening and table prayers, since no special prayers are

anywhere prescribed for those occasions. Hence a member of the order who would divide his office in a way as to say three Our Fathers in the morning, three in the evening, and one before and after each meal, would not be delinquent in this respect; although he would no doubt do better by adding his office to the usual daily prayers.

It is allowed to anticipate a part of the divine office. Beginning at two o'clock in the afternoon you may recite six Our Fathers of the office for the following day. This often comes as a handy privilege in view of a heavy and busy day ahead. The daily office does not bind under sin, of course; and the director or visitor may for a sufficient reason reduce the number of Our Fathers for an individual member, or impose another prayer instead, or dispense from the obligation entirely, say in case of sickness.

Always in Touch with God

To recite twelve Our Fathers each day, regardless of the stress of business or the pressure of occupations, regularly and consistently for years and years, is no light and easy task. At times it requires considerable effort and sacrifice. But it, too, is not without its manifold consolations and other compensations. King David of old felt delight in knowing, that he called upon the Lord seven times a day. It was his method of always remaining close to, and in touch with God,

of remembering His benign presence and assuring himself of His continual help and protection. In times of tribulation and weakness this recurring prayer was his solace and support, in the periods of attacks and temptations it was his safeguard and deliverance, and in seasons of prosperity and success it was his source of self-restraint and composure.

The daily office, prudently distributed through the day, will mean the same to the fervent tertiary. This constant communion with God in prayer will bring him nearer and nearer to God, and have him taste more and more each day how sweet the Lord is to those who love and serve Him without reserve and limitation. No lover finds it irksome to call his beloved on the telephone ever so often during the day; nor does the love-lorn maiden complain of being interrupted too frequently and variously by her adorer. Such should be the relations between the soul and its God; and such they will be by and by in the tertiary who is faithful to his daily breviary.

They Pierce the Heart of God

Finally it is worth while to bear in mind, that the divine office, which you are asked to recite as a tertiary, is a public and official prayer, said by a vast choir of noble and holy men and women the world over, in the name of the Church. Even though your personal recitation of the twelve Our

Fathers be slack, weak and faulty, still the value of the entire choir's prayer accrues to you because of your tertiary affiliation. To use a perhaps somewhat shocking, yet telling illustration: When a convict is shot to death by a squad of marksmen who all shoot at his heart at the same time, the victim may receive but one bullet in his heart, yet all, even the most awkward among the shooters, are accredited with the killing. Besides, he hardly has a chance to escape with his life, when so many and among them such clever gunmen aim at his heart.

In a similar, though in a much more soothing and cheering manner, there are many prayers in the Franciscan choir aiming at the heart of God at the same time and with the same petition. You may be the poorest and most infirm among them. Yet of them all one will be sure to hit the heart of God and move it to acquiesce in the prayer of all. As a member of the order you will have your share of the credit as well as of the profit. Such is the very nature and efficacy of a public or official prayer of the Church.

They Sweep Away Every Resistance

Or, to use another metaphor, take millions and millions of drops of water. Each one individually is small and weak, and exerts no force. It is altogether unnoticed. But let the millions coalesce into one, and they become a deluge that

carries away every opposition. In the same way your prayer and your tertiary brother's or sister's prayer may of themselves be faint and powerless to make any appreciable impression. But once the prayers of the millions of Franciscans, yours included, converge into one, they become a power to which the Almighty Himself cannot but yield. You have God at your mercy, so to say, whenever you approach Him in and with such a volume of humble and pleading petition.

The Monthly Conference

A further obligation of tertiaries is the attendance at the monthly meetings of the order. A religious order whose members never met as such, or only at very long intervals, would hardly deserve its name, as it would not supply the help there is in mutual assistance, edification and stimulation: the very things for which an order is instituted. It is to be a remedy of the condition described by the Bible in the words: "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up" (Eccl., 4, 10). For this reason the Third Order rule prescribes that the members gather for a religious meeting at least once a month. And the Holy See has considered this monthly religious meeting so important that it has granted a plenary indulgence, under the usual conditions, to the members who attend it. If they reflect,

that in former times the faithful would undertake long, arduous and perilous pilgrimages to the Holy Land or to Rome to gain a plenary indulgence, tertiaries will consider it well worth while to attend a pious meeting not far from their homes in view of the same substantial reward.

More Gain than Loss

It is true, that at times the regular and consistent presence at this meeting subjects the loyal tertiary to considerable self-denial. He must at times forego a pleasant outing, a delightful party or an inviting show. He must occasionally appear odd and singular to his friends and relatives. But these sacrifices have their immediate and most adequate compensations. Aside from the plenary indulgence mentioned above, which in itself would be an abundant reward for the aforesaid renouncements, the taking part in the monthly meeting provides the animation which insures permanency in the order to the end, and close fidelity to its wholesome regulations. This means nothing else than the assurance of a high degree of salvation.

The Beginning of the End

Whenever a member grows careless in the observance of the rule of the order and is gradually weaned away from it entirely, so much so as formally or virtually to discontinue membership

in it, this is usually traceable to the neglect of the monthly meetings. Thomas was not with the apostles when they saw the Lord after His resurrection, and consequently he wavered in his belief in the divinity of Jesus and the truth of His promises: in the same way the disciple of St. Francis, who wilfully keeps aloof from the prescribed meetings of the tertiaries, gradually looses his faith in St. Francis and his ideals, and forfeits the wondrous benefits of the influence and intercession of the Assisian Seraph.

A Brake and a Drag

Furthermore a member delinquent in his attendance at the monthly meetings exercises a deadening influence upon the other members and destroys, as much as depends on him, the morale of the fraternity. Such absence, indifferently and repeatedly perpetrated, is contagious. It invites imitation. A number of such absentees render the meetings less interesting and inspiring. Genuine and virtuous solidarity must prevail here as in the other departments of the order: one for all, and all for one.

Every member should contribute his share to render the monthly meetings spirited, enthusiastic and attractive. Only thus will they achieve the results they are intended to produce. Incidentally it may be observed, that by being intentionally absent from the monthly meetings, a member not

only misses the salutary instructions of the director and grows or remains ignorant of the status and course of the fraternity and the order at large, but also foregoes the opportunity of contributing his share to the order's fund for its works of charity and religion.

It is needless to add that, for a substantial reason, the dispensation from the attendance at one or more or all monthly meetings is readily given by the director of the fraternity. If this dispensation can not be obtained beforehand, an humble excuse should soon be handed or sent to the secretary at an early date, as a token of good will, in case of justifiable absence.

Private Membership

A word anent private membership in the order may be welcome. This means, that the tertiary is not attached to, or affiliated with any established fraternity. It is permissible for grave and solid reasons, and occurs not infrequently; for instance on behalf of those who live at a considerable distance from a fraternity, so that it would be quite inconvenient, or expensive, or both, to attend the meetings; or of priests, bishops or other ecclesiastical dignitaries, who can not be expected to attend the meetings and take part in the ordinary activities of the order; or of such who, because of hostile personal or domestic circumstances, can not publicly affiliate or be

active with the order. They may be "silent" members and yet gain the privileges of the order.

Beyond these and equivalent cases, it is neither a good sign nor a spiritual advantage to be a mere silent member of the order. Even if such a one really complies with what he considers the substantial obligations of the order: the wearing of the habit, the recitation of the daily office, etc.—which is rather dubious because of the very stand he takes—he will hardly ever enter deep into the real spirit of St. Francis, nor will he be inflamed with an enthusiasm for the seraphic ideals. By nature we are so constituted, that without contact with others it is hard, if not impossible, to become and stay aglow with ardor for sublime spiritual aims. Besides, where is his contribution to mutual edification, stimulation and animation? No wonder the order dislikes silent members of this stamp.

The Automobile, a Blessing and a Curse

Finally, as to the monthly meeting, there is another consideration worth while. The automobile is a wonderful invention, dispensing big and manifold advantages of various descriptions and grades. In religion it is helpful in many ways, but it is also responsible for a great part of the Lord's Day being stolen from the Lord. It induces many Catholics Sunday after Sunday to hear the earliest and shortest possible Holy Mass—if they hear

Mass at all—and to devote the rest of the day to a sort of joy-riding in the automobile, quite forgetful of Him Who provided them with so much comfort and prosperity in life. This is not as it should be. No one objects to reasonable recreation, even by means of the auto, on a Sunday. But when recreation reduces to a minimum the service rendered to the Lord on His own day, it becomes reprehensible and obnoxious.

Would You Endure It?

If your boss or foreman would tell you on a holiday to which you had a perfect title, say the Fourth of July, that the first hour of it after sunrise was yours, but that you would have to devote the rest to him and his work, you would resent it bitterly and vindicate your claim to the entire day. The whole Sunday is the Lord's Day, and to render to the Lord just a tiny part of the day is not apt to conciliate His favor or to win His good graces. Against this dangerous practice, then, the rule of the Third Order guards its members by having them attend a religious meeting at least on one Sunday afternoon each month—the meetings are commonly held on Sunday afternoon or evening—and by thus setting aside one Sunday afternoon it will easily induce them to get the habit of dedicating to the Lord every Sunday and holyday, not only in part, but altogether. God will reward them in proportion at

the arrival of His day, which will never have an end, but which will always begin over and over, with renewed food for ecstacy and bliss, throughout all the ages of eternity. Amen.

LECTURE IV.

The Tertiary's Obligations

PART TWO

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will pay my vows to the Lord before all His people" (Ps. 115, 12, 14).

IN the days of St. Francis, owing to divers reasons, the frequent reception of Holy Communion on the part of the laity was quite uncommon. Even persons of acknowledged holiness, for instance the great St. Elizabeth of Hungary, were directed by their spiritual guides to receive only at long intervals, say about every three or four months. Less fervent Catholics by and by neglected the Holy Sacrament so long, that the Church was finally induced to make the law binding all its children, who had attained the age in which they could discern the Eucharistic Bread from ordinary bread, to receive the Sacrament at least once a year, and that at Easter time.

The Knight of the Most Holy Sacrament

To St. Francis belongs much of the credit for the great revival of active faith in, and reverence for the Most Holy Sacrament, which is a feature

of the marvelous thirteenth century. In his rule he bound the tertiaries to communciate often and to attend Holy Mass regularly. Although the monthly reception of the Bread of Life, which the rule imposes upon tertiaries, is not considered high piety today, still we are to bear in mind, that the rule comprises all classes of people and must consider them all in its provisions; that it merely fixes the minimum for tertiaries when it speaks of receiving once a month, even as the Church establishes the minimum for all Christians when it enjoins upon them to communicate at least once a year; finally that even a monthly worthy reception of the Holy Sacrament will insure salvation with a rather comfortable margin to the recipient.

But the fervent tertiary will also reflect that, even as the neglect of annual Communion stigmatizes one as a lax and disloyal Catholic, so too neglect of monthly Communion brands the tertiary as a tepid and indifferent member of the order; and as the conscientious Catholic goes to Communion often in order never to neglect his annual duty, so the ardent child of St. Francis aims to receive weekly or even daily so as never to omit its monthly debt. Indeed, since the Church not only allows, but urges all its children to communicate daily as much as possible, the tertiaries should aim and long to form the vanguard of the daily communicants in every parish.

It Was an Event

But here a reminder is not out of place. In former ages when, as was mentioned above, the reception of the Holy Eucharist was quite infrequent even on the part of the pious laity, there was this partial compensation, that the fervent recipient usually prepared himself for the visit of his heavenly Guest with the greatest diligence and most intense earnestness. Every Holy Communion was an event in his life, and he treated it as such. It completely absorbed him, body and soul, for a considerable period.

Far be it from us to sponsor a return to anything smacking of Jansenism or rigorism with regard to the dispositions required for the worthy reception of the Food of Angels, or to endorse overtimidity or scrupulosity in this delicate matter: yet it must be admitted, that one of the accompaniments of frequent and daily Communion in many recipients is an over-familiarity with our Eucharistic Lord, which wants the tender respect and loving deference due to so dear and august a Visitor. Their preparation, if there is any, is merely habitual and perfunctory; their thanksgiving, if they perform one, is mechanical and devoid of warmth. In their manner they give rise to the suspicion, that they lack one of the conditions for daily Communion, namely the right intention, or the sincere will to progress in the love of God and the holiness of life.

The Daily Holy Mass

With reference to the Most Blessed Sacrament the rule of the Third Order also asks its members, if they can conveniently do so, to attend Holy Mass each day. This clause requires elucidation, for it is used by not a few as an excuse for not joining the order since, as they say, there can be no thought of them going to Mass every day.

The rule has those members in view who have no good reason for not assisting at Mass daily: their time is practically their own; they live at a convenient distance from church; their health warrants daily attendance at Mass: if they have the spirit of their father, St. Francis, and anything of his appreciation of the Most Holy Eucharist, they will need no special coaxing to be present at the Sacrifice of Calvary day for day, but it will rather be a pain and mortification for them to be forced by some occasional cause to stay away from it.

Those tertiaries, however, who are busy with work either outside or inside their homes, or for whom it would be a considerable inconvenience to go to Mass daily, do not fall under the rule, although even they will attend the Holy Sacrifice also on weekdays every now and then according to their capacity and opportunities.

In the Eyes of Francis the Lowliest Priest Precedes the Highest Archangel of Heaven

The relative compliance with the rule of the order regarding Holy Communion and Holy Mass will beget in the loyal tertiary a proper and fervent attitude towards our Eucharistic Lord also in other departments. In line with the historic utterance of St. Francis, who emphatically declared, that the most lowly priest on earth, because of his power to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ, meant more to him, and challenged his reverence more than the highest and brightest archangel of heaven, the true tertiary has and shows the tenderest and strongest reverence for every priest of the Most High in thought, word and deed; nor will he allow any human consideration or feeling of his own, or any evidence of human weakness, real or apparent, in the priest, to diminish or interfere with this sentiment of reverence for the "apple of God's eye".

He will moreover contribute cheerfully and liberally, according to his means, to the church, the home of the God of the Eucharist, for its proper maintenance, cleanliness and adornment; and to the home and foreign missions, in order to share in the spread of the domain of the Eucharistic King; and to seminaries and Catholic schools, convents and kindred institutions, in order to have part in the fostering and the developing of vocations to the priesthood, brotherhood and

sisterhood, so that the Lord of the Eucharist may not be without His devoted ministers, attendants and consecrated spouses.

The Oftener You Cleanse Your Soul the Easier It Becomes

The frequent reception of Holy Communion is rendered easy to the tertiary by the article of the rule which calls for the daily examination of conscience. People who stay away too long from the holy table do it, as a rule, not so much from aversion for the Sacred Eucharist as from repugnance for confession. This again usually has its root in an indistinct or bemuddled conscience, the clearing up of which they shrink from. If their conscience were in order or, anyway, if they had clarity as to its actual condition, they would not dread confession so much as they do, and they would be more inclined to receive Holy Communion often.

Every sensible man, engaged in a serious line of business, makes some daily accounting of his transactions. His interest in his affairs moves him to do it. Yet no business whatsoever can compare in any degree with the *one business* of our life: Salvation. Hence every earnest Christian wants to balance his accounts of it at least once a day; and he does this in the examination of conscience.

Be on the Square with God

The genuine tertiary will therefore not omit so wholesome and profitable a practice. He will never allow his conscience to get away from his control and careful management, let alone to become hopelessly involved through long neglect. He will always end his examination with a fervent and wholesouled act of perfect contrition, which will square him regularly with the justice of God, and restore or increase his friendly relations with his Judge-to-be. When it is time to approach the tribunal of penance at the end of the month, fortnight or week, as the case may be, the process of receiving the holy sacrament of penance will then be hardly more of a tax than the daily examination of conscience, nor require much more time than it.

Body and Soul

How much and what close attention does not our body require for its proper appearance before men: the face, the hands, the fingernails, the hair, etc.! Why should the soul require or receive less for its becoming appearance before God? And as daily attention to the cleanliness and beauty of the body is easier, more grateful and comfortable than, say a merely monthly care, so, too, the soul thrives better under the same process.

The Greatest Commandment

In keeping with our Lord's solemn pronouncement, that charity is the first precept of the law, it is safe to say, that no point of the tertiary rule is more important than that which demands the exhibition of real and active charity towards all, especially the sick and needy members of the order. In case of distress the soul deserves more attention than the body; hence the sacraments of the Church will be given precedence to the corporal provisions. Yet, as man is now constituted, the soul is often reached easiest, quickest and best through the body; consequently the bodily wants of a brother or sister in the order—without excluding others, of course—will be given hearty and generous attention and relief.

The Best Advertisement

Nothing advertises the order so effectively, favorably and widely, as the consistent, impartial and ready compliance of the members with this most important injunction of the rule. The golden rule to do unto others as you would like to be done by, were the conditions reversed, must guide and inspire you here. The day may come very soon when it will be your turn to be the object of charity, and to receive from others the kind services and liberal attention you at one time dispensed.

The Salvation Army of the Church

Not without a degree of pertinence the Third Order has been styled the Salvation Army of the Church. One good element of the Salvation Army, namely its commendable exhibition of a practical charity, whenever a brother or sister is in distress, has been a feature of the Third Order from its beginning; and wherever this trait is warmly and consistently lived up to, the order lacks neither recognition nor growth nor funds.

The order's aim is in the sphere of its influence to restore as much as possible the ideal spirit of primitive Christianity, when "the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul: neither did anyone say, that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but all things were common unto them. . . Neither was there anyone needy among them" . . . for "distribution was made to everyone, according as he had need" (Acts, 4, 32 ecc.).

The Grand Reward

Our Lord renders the practice of charity easy and inviting by personifying Himself with the beneficiaries of charity according to the grand declaration by which He initiated and perpetuated true social relief and uplift in the world: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me!" (Matt., 25, 40.) And to them that exercise it in the spirit

of faith Jesus, the Judge, shall say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and you covered Me: sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came to Me" (Ib., 34 ecc.).

Soon after his conversion St. Francis contracted a holy passion for visiting and nursing the sick afflicted with leprosy, the most loathsome and repulsive disease. St. Louis and St. Elizabeth, the patrons and glory of the Third Order, faithfully followed the lead of their holy father. May their example never want imitators in the seraphic army.

Have Mercy on Me, at Least You, My Friends!

The same charity St. Francis prescribes for the order's living members in distress he also enjoins in the interest of its deceased members, who in purgatory may be suffering more keenly than it is possible for anyone to suffer in this life. The tertiaries are asked to say the beads in common, if possible, for their departed associates to quicken their release from their unspeakable pains. Who can not be present at the common recitation of the rosary will endeavor to pray it privately. Every tertiary will render this prayer the more punctually and pleadingly, the more he is conscious of the law of life expressed in the adage: "It is my turn today: it will be yours tomorrow."

Another Way of Advertising

The rule also directs that the tertiaries attend the funeral of a deceased member. This is an act of charity which true love inspires and which even a healthy self-interest suggests. At the funeral of a member the prayers for him will be apt to be more vivid than otherwise; and the presence of his seraphic brothers and sisters will be in his behalf a vivid testimony of esteem, appreciation and recognition, which cannot fail to make a strong and most favorable impression upon his other mourners and the public in general. This attendance, when paid in relatively large numbers and from the proper motive of genuine charity, is another effective advertisement for the order, besides being a healthy stimulation and inspiration for the members themselves who at a funeral of a tertiary can not but have a realistic vision of their own death and funeral, which will be sure to follow ere long.

Have You Made a Will?

The provision of St. Francis in the tertiary rule, by which he directs the members whom it concerns to make a will or last testament betimes, surprises many at first sight. They wonder what the making of a will has to do with an order of penance. Yet upon close consideration it is found to be a substantial item of Christian prudence and charity, and sometimes

even of justice. St. Francis realized the precariousness of this life, which at best is like a slender thread ready to snap at any moment without notice. He had observed the havoc that is often wrought by a thoughtless parent who dies intestate, and thus inflicts much unnecessary worry, annoyance and trouble upon his children and other rightful heirs, and easily gives rise to scandalous and hate-breeding litigations in the courts, the agents of which frequently love to divide among themselves the money the decedents had had in mind to bequeath to their legitimate heirs or to worthy purposes of charity and religion.

Put It on Paper

They had it in mind, indeed, but they deferred putting it on paper in a legal way until death snatched them away unexpectedly, and left their money the prey of selfish exploiters, not seldom to be spent for purposes which the decedents positively abhorred. To forestall this disaster on behalf of his spiritual children who are blessed with earthly goods St. Francis asks them to make a will in good time. Hence soon after joining the order, say within six months, a person who has money or property of value should have made a will. The tertiary can make his will just as he pleases—the order is not interested in the features of it, just so he be guided by Christian principles in drafting it — and leave his goods to whomsoever he

chooses; but he should not allow death to overtake him intestate and possibly bring on some or all of the evil results of such un-Christian and unwise conduct. Moreover, the very fact of having made his will and disposed of his temporal goods, should remind the tertiary quite vividly of his impending death, and his obligation to keep the affairs of his soul in continual readiness for the immediate inspection and judgment on the part of God.

The Tertiary's Home a Little Church

The rule requires, that in the home of the tertiary the practices of Christian piety be fostered and a good example given. Among the domestic exercises of piety family and table prayers rank high. Nothing is more apt to keep the spirit of faith and the remembrance of God's presence and goodness alive in the members of the family than the family and table prayers recited regularly and in concert. Through them the family consecrates itself to God and to religion again and again each day as a family unit, and not only each individual for him or herself.

The whole family as such wants to belong and adhere to God, and it delights in professing this repeatedly every day. This practice calls down God's blessing upon a home in rich, continuous and lasting profusion. The family as a rule does not remain compact and integral long. The

children soon branch out into all directions to start independent households or livings for themselves. They may get into temptations against their holy faith and their good morals, more violent and beguiling than they ever conceived they would. Possibly they may be overcome by them for the time being and be weaned away from the God and the faith of their fathers.

But no matter how far they wander or are misled from the path of religion and virtue, if in their childhood homes family prayers were regularly recited, the picture of their father and mother and brothers and sisters joining them in worshiping God will recur to them with the vividness of the fondest memories, and it will haunt them with gentle and persuasive remorse until they revert again to the way of duty and of peace of mind and heart. St. Chrysostom says that every Christian home is a little parish church for itself. The parents are the priests, and it devolves upon them to fix the time for and to lead in prayer.

No Room for Profane or Ribald Speech

Closely aligned to the article of domestic piety is the rule's prohibition of profane and ribald and ugly speech in the tertiary's home. Family prayer, when sincerely practiced, and profanity or obscenity of speech can not cohabit long. One necessarily excludes the other. If, according to

the words just cited, a Christian's home is as a little parish church, it is obvious how much blasphemous, impious, lewd and scandalous talk is out of place in it. In this connection the rule's caution against taking an oath or swearing without sufficient grounds may also be emphasized. It is but the reiteration of our Lord's warning to His disciples: "Let your speech be, yea, yea; no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil" (Matt., 5, 37).

Provide the Home with Good, and Exclude Bad Literature

In line with the above is the admonition of the rule to provide the home with good Christian literature, and to exclude all reading that jars the sense of Catholic modesty or contains a danger to Christian faith. The library of every tertiary home ought to comprise a copy of an approved edition of the Catholic Bible, of the Lives of the Saints, a book explaining the rites and ceremonies and various feast days and other observances of the Church, an official book of the Third Order, containing the rule, a tertiary monthly periodical which will keep its readers in touch with the order, its progress and events, the diocesan weekly paper which brings the Catholic news of the diocese and of the world, and other kindred literature.

The money saved by denying all patronage to useless and harmful literature, of which our

sensational daily press in the United States is an outstanding example, will easily supply sufficient means for the maintenance of healthy Catholic reading matter in the home. What has been said of literature applies with equal force to pictures and statues, which often speak more forcibly to their beholders, especially the younger ones, than the printed line speaks to its readers. Tertiaries will therefore provide their homes with sacred images, indicative of their hearts' profession and attachments—and among them there should be at least one Franciscan emblem—and rigorously exclude every representation they should not like St. Francis to see, were he to visit their homes in person. They will thus spare themselves one poignant and bitter remorse on their deathbeds.

Clothes, Shows and Dances

I have reserved to the last a very much discussed point of the rule, which is used more than any other to create prejudice against it among prospective candidates by the adversaries of the order, through the gross misconstructions they place upon it. This is the enactment enjoining upon all tertiaries to avoid every vain display and indecency of dress, and to eschew improper shows or theatrical entertainments and dances. In the eyes of such as are not friends of the order, nor have its welfare and growth at heart, this

prohibition simply means the entire abstention from all indulgence in the fashions of the day as well as in all amusements of the world, let them be ever so legitimate and honorable and innocent in themselves.

This is evidently a misinterpretation, and the root of it is seldom good faith, or benevolence and charity. As regards the three points which the article in question comprises it is safe to say, that whatever is allowed a good and conscientious Christian on those heads, is also permitted to the tertiary. Every good Catholic is in conscience bound to avoid vanity and selfish display and immodesty in dress, and is forbidden to dress beyond his means. He is furthermore enjoined from attending improper or reprehensible theatrical shows and dances.

In his rule St. Francis emphasizes this prohibition, common to all Catholics, to call the tertiaries' attention to these very general and insidious menaces to virtue, and to warn them emphatically against them. And just because these things are so dangerous the fervent tertiary, imbued thoroughly with the spirit of St. Francis, will rather abound than lack in their avoidance, and prefer to deny himself what he might lawfully enjoy rather than run the risk of indulging in what might draw him away from God, however little. Besides he feels that his very allegiance to the army of Francis

imposes upon him the duty of giving a good example in this important matter of unworldliness and devotion to Jesus Crucified.

Not All Agree

I am aware that not all interpreters of the rule endorse the position I have taken in this matter. Some will insist that an exception must be made with regard to dancing, which is, they hold, forbidden absolutely and unqualifiedly by the rule. They appeal to the Italian original of the rule to prove this. They go as far as to allow the power of dispensation, accorded the director and the visitor, to be extended to this clause as well as to all others of the rule, but they maintain that the dispensation is needed, and they want it to be asked for in favor of each individual case; so much so, that whenever a tertiary wants to take part in a dance, however honorable and justifiable, he or she must first obtain the required grant from the director of the order, who is not to give it but rarely and only for serious and urgent reasons.

Public Dance Halls Are to Be Shunned

It is not my purpose to enter into any theoretical discussion of this question here. But I shall merely remark, that I have observed, that it is quite a universal practice of Third Order directors in our country and elsewhere to allow dancing to

tertiaries generally under proper restrictions. These have reference to the character of the dancers, the environment, the occasion and the nature of the dance. The aforesaid directors positively frown on and firmly exclude every dance smacking of immodesty; they also forbid the frequentation of public dance halls with their boisterous, loose and lascivious gatherings. But where the dance and its accompaniments contain nothing whatever objectionable, they do not demur at the participation on the part of tertiaries, although they aim to wean them away as much and as soon as possible from this kind of amusement, which in its best form involves an element of moral danger to such as love and pursue it ardently.

There are directors of fraternities in our country, too, who follow the rigorous attitude outlined above. But I have noticed that their fraternities usually lack growth, and do not exert a wide influence, for the very reason that dancing today is a very universal amusement even among the best classes of Catholics, especially the younger ones; and at the very start to cut them off from it entirely and forever is not a good way to invite these young people—and the young are the most desirable candidates—to the imitation of St. Francis. The process of weaning them away from the craze for dancing gradually, by instilling in them the spirit of St. Francis and his love for

the Crucified One, after they have become members of the order, seems preferable. It also seems to be more in keeping with the aim of the great patron of the order, Leo XIII, in mitigating the rigor of the primitive rule, which he did to make the order more comprehensive and its rule easier of observance to the ordinary Catholic of a good mind and genuine piety.

There is no doubt that, if the order in this country would take a decided and peremptory stand against dancing in the way mentioned above, it would by that very fact render itself prohibitive to very many of our finest Catholics in all walks of life, and thereby cease to lay claim to be a popular order which aspires to reform society on a large and extensive scale. The same wise spirit which reduced or moderated other rigors of the rule, as being no longer adapted to the peculiar circumstances and mode of living prevalent in our times, may also be our guide in making prudent concessions with regard to dancing. This will not hinder us from indirectly disabusing sincere tertiaries of their fancy for this shallow and less safe form of amusement sweetly, neatly and completely.

They Are Not Cast Out by Prayer and Fasting

St. Philip Neri calls the mortification of the palate the A B C of the spiritual life. In keeping with its spirit of moderation, and in view

of the present day conditions, the rule only imposes two annual fast days, in addition to those prescribed by the Church; namely the third of October, the vigil of the feast of St. Francis, and the seventh of December, the vigil of the feast of the Immaculate Mother, the special patroness of the Seraphic Order. If one for a good reason is exempt or dispensed from the fast days of the Church, he may also claim exemption or dispensation from the fast days of the order. Those who are able to fast are said by the rule to be deserving of much praise, if they either fast every Friday or abstain from fleshmeat every Wednesday. The rule moreover inculcates moderation in the use of food and drink at all times. The devout practice of table prayer will render this moderation easy and delightful.

Keep the Equilibrium

The fervent tertiary's aim is continually to maintain the proper ratio of power or equilibrium between body and soul. Owing to the weakness of the flesh the body has a tendency to overreach in its demands, to require more than it is entitled to, to encroach upon the sacred rights of the soul, and to weaken it in consequence.

To forestall this abuse and disaster it is wise to keep the body in rigid subjection. To make sure it will not get more than is coming to it, it is good policy to give it less than it desires, with modera-

tion, however, and prudence, for there may be as much intemperance in fasting as in eating.

Starve the Devil

Anyway, the fondness and partiality with which all the saints have regarded and regard fasting, must invest it with a peculiar value in our eyes. As we are situated on this earth, in all the struggles between body and soul the benefit of the doubt belongs to the soul. It needs all the favoritism we can show it. St. Chrysostom says: "When we fast, the devil starves, since he battens on our faults."

Those who are unable to fast corporally will be the more intent on fasting spiritually, by reasonably mortifying their senses, especially their eyes and tongues and ears. For this there are every day plenty of opportunities that can be exploited with a vast profit to interior peace, and a notable gain in the spiritual life, and a decided increase of heavenly glory. Amen.

LECTURE V.

The Tertiary's Reward

"Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord" (Ps. 127, 4).

IT was a very human and interesting question which Peter put to Jesus when he said: "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have?" (Matt., 19, 27.) Far from taking the query amiss, in His reply to it Jesus assured Peter that the reward would be glorious and beyond description. Even though to serve Him for mere love of Him is its own and superabundant reward, our Lord does not expect anything gratis. Every service done Him He remunerates a hundredfold on this earth, in addition to the glory by which He will compensate it in heaven.

"What, Therefore, Shall We Have?"

In the previous lecture we considered the obligations of the tertiary. They are not many; nor are they hard: but they are regular and require fidelity and persistency in their observance. The tertiaries, then, have a right to say with St. Peter: "What therefore shall we have?" What reward will be ours for this manner of life? These rewards have already been hinted at in

connection with the tertiary's obligations. It will be of benefit, however, to rehearse and to dwell on them with more preciseness and at greater length.

Hitch Your Car to a Star

The one outstanding reward, giving meaning, substance and color to all others, is expressed by our Savior in the words: "They shall possess life everlasting." Under the guidance and inspiration of St. Francis, and with the help of his powerful intercession with Jesus, the faithful tertiary will not only be sure of heaven, but also of a prominent place in heaven. His seraphic Father will carry him there.

The Assisian Elias

They tell of the crane in the polar regions that, when it flies over vast fields of snow and ice toward a brighter and better clime, it carries on its back smaller and weaker birds who are unable to make the long and difficult flight alone. In the same way many of us, who are weak and unsteady in virtue, and hardly able to sustain the long and tedious flight over the bleak and dangerous desert of this life, up the mount of perfection and holiness, are glad to have the strong and willing support of the Assisian Elias, who takes us up to heaven, as it were, in the fiery chariot of his seraphic love of Jesus Crucified.

Where Is the Hundredfold?

Granting that heaven will ultimately be the portion of the loyal child of St. Francis, the question is still in order: When, where and how does the tertiary receive the hundredfold on earth for his allegiance to Christ after the fashion of the Little Poor Man of Assisi?

By donning the habit of St. Francis the tertiary becomes to God an object of especial love and benevolence because of the very uniform he wears, as was pointed out in a previous lecture. God's love is never merely theoretical. It is always active and productive. It shows itself towards the tertiary by rendering him, in view of his membership in the order, a partaker of all the good works, prayers, sacrifices, labors and sufferings of all the members of the three orders of St. Francis.

One Thousand Shares of Stock

This assertion is quickly made, but it declares a vast truth that must be a vigorous incentive and a continual spur to every genuine son and daughter of Francis. In a material way the same assertion would strike us rapidly, vividly and deeply. Suppose a responsible party would come to you today and give you one thousand gilt-edged shares of very valuable stock. How happy you would be! In the way of dividends what amount of money would regularly flow into your hands

unasked and unsolicited in consequence of this donation! And how the consciousness of this would of itself be an abiding source of relief and joy to you! Yet, after all, what would all that money mean to you? You could not keep it long. And it might prove, as it frequently does, a cause of temporal and eternal disaster to you. At best, death would soon come and separate you heedlessly and forever from all your money.

Spiritual Dividends Are Better

Not so with regard to the spiritual treasures you become a participant of by being a faithful member of the Third Order of St. Francis. You receive celestial dividends, rich and abundant, day for day and moment after moment. By and by, provided you place no obstruction in the way, they will accumulate unto great wealth, and this wealth even death itself can not touch. In truth, far from parting you from it, death will but introduce you to the actual enjoyment of it.

A Sweet Feeling in Getting Rich

There is a keen pleasure in knowing, that in everlasting possessions you are incessantly growing richer and richer, not only by your own efforts but also through sharing in the solid spiritual acquisitions of countless others, from the tertiary pope to the lowest and most recent member of the order, namely the novice of a day; and, whilst

feeling your own weakness and comparative inability to amass many heavenly treasures, to be aware that you are proportionally credited with the good done by thirty thousand Franciscan friars the world over, who labor variously in the vineyard of the Lord, in the home and foreign missions, often under indescribable hardships and privations; by thousands and thousands of the strictly cloistered nuns of the second order who, completely and forever shut away from the world, are living and most pleasing holocausts to the Lord in innocence, mortification and prayer; by the fifty thousand or more tertiaries regular, or Franciscan Brothers and Sisters living in community, and devoting themselves unstintingly to works of the most disinterested, self-sacrificing and heroic charity and piety; finally by the two or three million members of the Third Order Secular, who try as best they may to serve God in the purity of their hearts and the penance of their lives, while they are made to breathe the tainted air of the sinful world, and are daily face to face with its corrupting lures and its luring corruptions.

How Many Shares Are You Holding?

Day for day to have a part in the value of the good done in thought, word and deed, by commission and omission, by so many saintly souls, the innocent as well as the penitent, who stand so

high in God's favor, is a boon that will be justly appreciated only under the revealing light of heaven. Yet the consciousness of its possession, as was said above, is in itself a great and constant delight to the faithful tertiary.

On his part, however, the sensible tertiary will bear in mind, that even as earthly corporations dispense their dividends according to the shares held by the respective stockholders, so the spiritual profit derived from membership in the Third Order is measured by the fervor and intensity of the member's loyalty to the order. How many shares are you holding?

Are You on the Right Road?

Whoever takes a long journey through strange and labyrinthine territory, with a keen desire to reach his goal, without a detour or delay, is always glad to ascertain again and again, that he is on the right road towards his aim. Nowadays the automobile roads are marked throughout the country in a way as to render the desired direction easily recognizable to the travellers. They are a great and welcome aid.

The One Worth-While Road

No road is so important as the road to heaven. It leads to the one goal that counts. If we miss all other goals but this, we are still unspeakably happy; whereas if we achieve all our other aims

but this, there will be no word to express our misery. Hence those who are intent on reaching this goal find the greatest consolation in knowing, that they are closely holding the right road.

The Tertiary Rule Full of Sign-Posts to Heaven

For tertiaries this road is marked by the rule of their order. They can be sure that as long as they observe its regulations, they can not deviate from the path which leads directly to heaven. This assurance is increased in them by their association with the other members of the order, and by comparing their own conduct with that of the others. Once they are convinced, that they are going the way of many others, who are already in heaven according to the formal declaration of the Church, and of many more still on earth, who are evidently God-loving men and women and possessed with a veritable passion to go to heaven, they are satisfied they also are on the safe road to paradise. This sensation of itself outweighs in delight all the pleasures the world has in its power to promise or offer its votaries.

This joy is increased by the confidence begotten by the experience of the past. Having held the right road so long with the help of the tertiary road-signs, the child of St. Francis conceives the confidence of not losing sight of it in the future. What feeling can be sweeter than this?

If He Strays, He Quickly Returns

In case he does get off the right road for a time, it will not be hard for the tertiary to return to it again through the habits contracted while a loyal member of the order, which will clamor for their reassumption in a way as to give his conscience no rest unless he yields to their call; and also through the rebuking example of his brothers and sisters in the order, whose conduct is a continual cry to him to recover the seraphic highway from which he strayed. The sight of them will beget in him the desire to go back to his old and true love, in the enjoyment of which his mind was always at peace and his heart at rest. He will resume the observance of the rule anew, and live up to its regulations the more carefully, the more bitterly his wanderings have taught him, that there is no happiness away from Jesus and His Cross.

God's Periodical Cancellations of Debts

The many plenary and partial indulgences accorded the members of the Third Order are a further considerable profit and reward for the fervent tertiary. A plenary indulgence, as is well known, is the complete, and a partial indulgence, as the name indicates, is a partial remission of the temporal punishment due to forgiven sins. Dealing with the spiritual, or invisible and impalpable domain, this advantage does not strike us so favorably and so forcibly as it would,

did it refer to material considerations: say, for instance, if it were the entire or partial remission of an actual prison or money fine. How we should exult over it and welcome it then, although it would be as nothing compared to its value in the sphere of the soul.

On the Level with God's Justice

Whoever gains a plenary indulgence stands on the level with the justice of the Lord in his regard. Whatever his past sins may have been, now that he has duly repented of and confessed them, and gained a plenary indulgence, his whole debt with God is wiped out; so much so, that if he dies in this condition of soul, he will not have to detour to the very unpleasant road of purgatory, but will go straight to heaven. Having this view of, and this faith in a plenary indulgence, no Catholic but is very eager and happy to win it often and regularly, so he will be in a position for an arrow's flight to God's home. The anticipation of this is not a meagre satisfaction.

There are about one hundred and seventy-five days in the year when the tertiary gains a plenary indulgence by receiving the sacraments and complying with other conditions mentioned in tertiary manuals. The compliance with these or similar conditions is also required for the gaining of the other plenary indulgences still to be mentioned.

The Indulgenced Blessing

About thirty-five times a year a tertiary gains a plenary indulgence by receiving the "General Absolution" or the indulgenced blessing, either in public or, if he can not well be present at the public imparting of it, in the confessional from any priest, in pursuance of a request made for it. He is entitled to this blessing either on the day for which it is granted, or on the eve or vigil of the day, or in the entire octave following the day. He should have no fear or misgivings about making the request for the blessing, but merely say after his confession, and, preferably, before the absolution of the priest: "Father, please give me the General Absolution of the Third Order." A plenary indulgence is at stake, and it would be folly to forfeit it through human respect or some other unworthy motive.

The Pope's Blessing

Twice a year the tertiary is entitled to the papal blessing, to which is also attached a plenary indulgence. This is given only in public, and not in the confessional. Yet the tertiary who can not conveniently attend the public bestowal of it, is entitled to receive the General Absolution in the confessional instead. But again, he must humbly ask the confessor for it.

Red Letter Days

The tertiary receives a plenary indulgence on the days of his reception in the order, of his profession, and in the moment of his death. If he duly receives the sacraments or, in case no priest is present to assist him, if he is contrite, and speaks the Name of Jesus with his lips or, if this be not feasible, in his heart, and he is resigned to God's will in death, he gains a plenary indulgence in the very moment of his passing hence, and his soul wings its flight directly towards heaven. A joyous consideration this.

The Third Order Loves the Tertiary When He Is Alive; After Death It Does Not Forget Him

It is worthy of notice, that the Third Order pursues its members with its benefactions even after they depart from this life. Every Holy Mass that is offered up for a deceased tertiary has joined to it a plenary indulgence for his soul as a result of his affiliation with the order. Moreover he is assured the suffrages or prayers not only of the fraternity of which he was a member, but also of the whole Third Order and, in addition, of the entire Second and First Orders of St. Francis. His friends and relatives may forget him sooner or later—men are so constituted by nature that through their interest in the living they gradually forget the dead—but the three orders will not forget. Daily they bombard heaven with their

prayers for the departed members until God relents and gathers the seraphic sufferers with their Father, St. Francis.

It Is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive

The Third Order not only relieves its members with the aid of indulgences, but it also enables them to solace and deliver the Poor Souls in purgatory in a ready and abundant manner. In this connection the so-called Indulgences of the Stations of the Most Blessed Sacrament are particularly remarkable. For every recitation of six Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorys for the intention of the pope, at any time and in any place, the tertiary gains many rich partial indulgences and, on specified days, one plenary indulgence. This gives him an occasion daily to free a number of God-loving souls from their unspeakable pains and, incidentally, to make powerful friends for himself there where good friends are worth while. Every day is a sort of Portiuncula Day for him.

Portiuncula Everywhere

Having mentioned the beautiful and blessed Portiuncula feast on which, in consequence of the generous grant of our Lord to Francis in response to Mary's pleading, millions of plenary indulgences have been and are gained for the suffering souls, it is to be observed, that the

tertiary, in case he is not within convenient reach of a Franciscan or privileged church on Portiuncula Day, may gain this wondrous indulgence by visiting whatever church he can approach.

The Franciscan Crown

Tertiaries gain a plenary indulgence by reciting the Franciscan crown or rosary. It is also called the Rosary of the Seven Joys of Mary. It consists of seven decades, to which are added two Hail Marys to commemorate the traditional number of the seventy-two years Mary is supposed to have lived, and one Our Father and Hail Mary for the intention of the Holy Father. To gain this plenary indulgence the rosary need not be said continuously; it is sufficient, if it is said in the course of the day, whatever the interruptions; nor is the meditation on the mysteries required; neither are beads necessary, let alone blessed beads, just so the prescribed number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys are recited.

Mary Heard His Prayer

Years ago a bishop was making his episcopal visitation on foot amid the mountains of Scotland. Losing his way one evening he had to ask hospitality of the only house in sight. He was received with cordiality and was made to feel at home by the family who lived in the house. His overcoat

was drawn up to his neck in a way as to cover his clerical insignia. Whilst they conversed together he was wondering if his hosts were Catholic, and they were wondering who he was. He soon noticed, that they had a dreary expression on their faces, kind as they were to him, and he asked them why they looked so sad. They replied, that the father of the family was in the other room in a dying condition and, although it was apparent that he could not live, he was still protesting that he was not going to die.

The Bishop and the Dying Man

The bishop asked leave to see him, which was cheerfully granted. Approaching the dying man he asked him how he felt. The patient at once declared that, whilst he was very ill and feeling very bad, he was not going to die; he was sure of that. The bishop asked him why he was sure. The man answered with the query: "Are you a Catholic?" The bishop assured him that he was not only a Catholic, but a priest and a bishop. With that the man's face brightened as he exultingly said: "I knew Mary would hear my prayer. Every day in saying the rosary I begged her not to let me die without the assistance of a priest. Hence I was sure I should not expire without one. Bishop, Mary has sent you to me, to help me die in the Lord." The bishop heard his confession and otherwise assisted the dying

man towards a peaceful and happy passage into eternity.

Faithful tertiaries cling to the daily recitation of the Franciscan Crown for the grace of a death after the manner of that of St. Francis of Assisi. They do not let a day pass without saying what part of the rosary they can recite in keeping with their circumstances. And Mary never forgets.

The Tertiary's Shroud

It is the privilege of tertiaries to be buried in the long habit of St. Francis, if they so desire; it is not prescribed. Some people dread the idea of being laid out in the sombre garb of penance, and they even allow this dread to keep them from entering the order. Yet, whatever may have been their previous misgivings, once the members imbibe the Franciscan spirit of humility and unworldliness, they feel proud and joyous at the thought of being held worthy to wear in and after death the garb of the great Lover of Jesus, whose life's motto was that of St. Paul: "For to me, to live is Christ: to die is gain" (Philipp., 1, 21). Amen.

LECTURE VI.

Futile Objections and Excuses

"Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt., 22, 14).

IN the behavior of our Lord we can not fail to observe that, whilst He is very generous in the bestowal of His priceless gifts, He never forces their acceptance upon anyone. This He leaves to the free will of the beneficiary who, if he chooses, can decline the most extraordinary favor of God.

Just a Few

The call to the religious life in the Third Order of St. Francis is, as we have seen, a highly precious and consequential bounty of heaven. God does not confer it upon all Christians living in the world but comparatively only upon a few. And even these few to whom the call is tendered may heed or ignore it as they please; but they will be responsible for the results either way.

God's Mysterious Providence

God's providence is as mysterious as it is sweet. He alone knows its secrets. In the spiritual as well as in the material sphere He loves the greatest variety joined to the most perfect

harmony. He does not lead all souls the same way. Some He draws to Himself by straight and short paths: others He permits to go devious and tortuous roads; some He lures up steep and dizzy grades: others He directs along ordinary and even ways. Hence He does not intend, that all pious seculars enter the religious life in the world and become tertiaries; not even all of those who live in the midst of tertiaries and are regular worshipers in churches served by Franciscan Fathers. However frequently they may see the habit of St. Francis, and however favorably they may be impressed by what it stands for, as a uniform for themselves it has for them no appeal.

"Judge Not, and You Will Not Be Judged"

Nor is this their fault. They are simply not called. God does not give them this grace, although He gives them plenty other graces, perhaps just as good, possibly better. I am mentioning this in the interest of fairness and charity. We must never be hasty in judging others and saying off-hand that, as they are situated, they ought to join the Third Order and, if they do not, they are evidently trifling with, or neglecting the grace of God. Our most ardent interest in, and love for the order must not unbalance our judgment or outrun our charity, but it must always permit us to know and concede, that God's ways are not our ways, that His

graces are manifold, and are distributed according to His and not our pleasure.

Some Balk

On the other hand it can not be denied, that there are those who receive the divine invitation to the Order of Penance, and who are conscious of a strong attraction to it engendered by the grace of God: instead of yielding to it, however, they either positively fight against it, or they behave towards it in a negative and indifferent manner until it gradually dies away. No one will say, that they are committing sin by not accepting the vocation to the seraphic religious life in the world. If it is not of itself a sin, as theologians tell us, to decline the vocation to the religious or convent life in the strict sense, however distinct and unmistakable it may be, there can be no question of sin when the call to the Third Order is at stake.

A Real Misfortune

Yet such a declension of grace must always be rated as a real misfortune. It may stop in its very source and forever a flow of heavenly riches the extent of which, had it been duly received and nursed, it is not possible for the human mind to calculate. Graces are like a chain; one draws the other: allow the chain to break, however, and it may be hard, if not impossible to recover the same line of grace.

The Devil Is Crafty

Hence the insistence, assiduity and craftiness of the devil in attempting to dissuade the beneficiaries of the great grace of vocation to the Third Order from complying with it. He suggests all possible specious reasons and futile pretexts to induce them to forego, or, at least to postpone the entrance into this grand and safe haven of salvation. Avowed and secret, conscious and unconscious enemies of the Third Order assist Satan by speaking against the order directly or indirectly, or by observing in its regard a malevolent and damning silence. But the elect of the Lord will assert themselves in the face of all opposition, and just in spite of it they will don the uniform and embrace the life of St. Francis more fervently and cling to it more tenaciously.

Not Out of Date

The enemies of the order tell us, that the Third Order is out of date. "There was a time," so they say rather unctiously, "when it was timely. In the Middle Ages people loved to display their piety by wearing various insignia of religion, such as habits or scapulars and cords, and by prescribing to themselves fixed programs of fasting and prayer. But times have changed and men with them. The modern spirit is different. It loves freedom of movement, liberty of action and personal independence even in religion and piety.

It eschews parade and demonstration, and prefers to practice its worship of God individually, freely and privately, without the aid of scapulars, cords, novitiates, professions, visitations and what not. It simply harks back to the injunction of Christ to adore God in spirit and in truth."

"My Words Shall Not Pass!"

Whoever understands the Third Order of St. Francis knows, that its rule is nothing else than the gospel of Jesus Christ applied to the Christian's ordinary daily life. Hence as long as the gospel of Christ with its maxims of humility, self-denial, charity, unworldliness, and the love of the cross are not out of date—"Heaven and earth shall pass, but My words shall not pass" Matt., 24, 35,)—the Third Order of St. Francis will be very much in fashion for all God-loving and heaven-craving souls. Whilst Jesus emphasizes the adoration of God in spirit and in truth—an adoration the Third Order aims especially to foster—He also declares most solemnly, that He will confess before His Father in heaven those who confess Him before men.

"No Field for the Third Order"

"The United States, however," so they insist, "is not a good field for the Third Order. The American mind is too practical, too sober and too matter-of-fact to be attracted by the Order of

Penance. Besides, the American people are altogether too busy to pay attention to anything but the very substance of religion; hence they can not and will not bother with frills and fads of piety, even if they go by the name of a religious order."

Facts Are Stubborn

The best answer to this objection is provided by facts. At the present day there is perhaps nowhere in the world a greater and more successful boom of the Third Order than in the United States. The order is daily becoming known in wider circles, and for it to become known means to be loved and embraced. This boom was strikingly evidenced, and at the same time strongly fed by the splendid First National Convention of Tertiaries held in Chicago in 1921; and there is every reason to hope, that the Second National Convention which will be held in New York in 1926 will register a great increase in this seraphic boom as to quantity as well as quality.

The Americans Are Splendid Prospects

And just because it is the genius of our people to be practical, sober and matter-of-fact, the Americans are excellent candidates for the Third Order. It suggests no extravagances of devotion, nor does it encourage eccentricities of piety or

foster sickly emotionalism. It merely points out very clearly and categorically the straight way to heaven, without sentimentality, evasion or affectation. This manner can not but appeal forcibly to the American temperament and business spirit. The typical American must welcome the Third Order's straightforward, candid and above-board directions regarding the efficient dispatch of the *one business* of life: Salvation.

America the Best Field for the Order

Moreover the very unprecedented prosperity and abundance of earthly goods our country enjoys are another reason why it is a good and proper soil for the Third Order of St. Francis. The wealthy Catholics need its wholesome lessons of the love of poverty, humility and detachment from this world in order not to be ensnared by riches and have their minds turned away from eternal treasures. On the other hand the poor, of whom there will always be many even in the richest and most prosperous country, need the spirit of the order to keep them in Christlike patience, resignation and joy in their distress, while being surrounded everywhere by such as are blessed with affluence and plenty.

And to both rich and poor in this land of boundless material prospects and opportunities it is a salutary restraint to be continually reminded by

the scapular and cord of St. Francis that man does not live of bread alone, but of every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Nor will it harm the American mood of material self-sufficiency and national self-complacency to express faith in, and humbly to bow to such weak and foolish things of this earth as the tertiary scapular and cord, and to look upon them as symbols containing promises of a far better and happier existence, both here and hereafter, than this world knows of.

Good for the Women

For women, particularly old women, it is claimed, the Third Order has its fascinations; but for men and young men it is not fit. They are not won by, and they find no satisfaction in its accoutrements and practices. They prefer to exercise their piety in their own way and measure. The very fact that so many pious women belong to the order seems to make the men suspicious of it, and to beget in them a dislike and aversion for it.

Sixteen to One—A One-Sided Story

A rather cynical spectator at a Third Order reception said, that when he saw so many men and so few ladies go up to the rail for enrolment, he was reminded of a story he had heard a Protestant clergyman tell at a public gathering.

The rector was in his study one Sunday evening around eight o'clock, preparing his sermon for the services that were about to begin. Just then an ardent young couple called on him with marriage license and everything, asking to be married by him right away.

The minister answered that he was due in church at once and could not be delayed, as the congregation was waiting for him; but if they would return later, he would be glad to perform the ceremony. They rejoined, that they could not wait, as they were taking a train at eleven the same evening.

"If that is the case," he said, "you have plenty of time. I propose that you go with me now to church. I shall have the ordinary services. When they are over, before I dismiss the parish, I shall announce, that in case there are parties present desiring to be married, they should please step forward, and I shall be happy to officiate at their wedding. Then you come forward and you will have the entire congregation as witnesses to your happiness, and you will have ample time to make your train."

This appealed strongly to the young couple, and they and their witnesses accompanied the minister to the church. When the latter made the aforesaid announcement to the parish, inviting people desirous of being married to advance, one young man and sixteen girls came forward. The girls

seemed happy, all of them, but the young man was very much embarrassed. Of course the speaker did not and could not vouch for the truth of this very one-sided story.

Five to One

Yet it is true, that by far the majority of tertiaries are women. In this country the proportion is about five to one. This is not the women's, nor the order's, but the men's fault. They are shutting their eyes to, or are passing up a signal opportunity of assuring their salvation and enhancing their heavenly glory. It is not the only instance where men, who pride themselves on their superior intelligence and judgment, permit the women to outclass and to outrun them in the solid appraisal of the value of the *one thing* worth while, and of the best and most efficient means of obtaining it securely and sublimely.

Women Are No Objection

Far from constituting an objection against the Third Order, the fact that so many pious and God-fearing women are attracted by, and fervently love it, is a strong argument in its favor. By nature woman is differently formed than man. God has given her finer spiritual sensibilities, a stronger sense of religion, a more pronounced tendency to piety than to man. When she is as

she should be, she easier communes with God and the angels, and she feels their presence more readily and sweetly than does man. She has a kind of an intuition as to spiritual values, as to how to please God most, and to secure salvation best.

"Ask a Noble Woman"

An adage says: If you want to know what is the right and fitting thing to do in a certain situation, ask a good and noble woman. She knows it not from books, but by instinct or intuition, and her natural sense of propriety and delicacy. Similarly in religion good women are safe and inspiring guides. Hence we see them so numerous about the confessional, at the holy rail, at Holy Mass and wherever substantial bargains of salvation can be had. If their preponderance at those sacred functions does not militate against the value of them, the prevalence of good women in the Third Order, far from creating a prejudice against it, ought to be a telling advertisement in its behalf.

"An Order for Old Women"

It must be admitted, too, that there are a large number of old women in the order. Some time ago, when I was about to enroll a large class in the order, I was introduced to a young lady of about

twenty-one, a daily communicant. When I suggested to her to become a member, she expressed genuine surprise and said: "Why, Father, I thought the Third Order was only for old women." In her parish the order had been neglected for years, and the few surviving members were old women. Hence her impression.

A Flattering Compliment

But the faithful allegiance of these old women is a flattering compliment to the order and decidedly in its favor. If anyone is, these good women are through with the world. They know the emptiness of its pleasures and the shallowness of its promises. Their passions are practically spent and no longer blind or color their judgment. They are standing, as it were, on the brink of the grave and on the very confines of eternity. Their natural vision of spiritual values is clarified and intensified to the utmost. If they, then, adhere to the order so fondly, gratefully and wholeheartedly, it evidently must be a most reliable and desirable factor of salvation.

There Are Men, Too

Yet there are also a number of men and young men in this country, who are proud and glad to wear the livery of the Order of Penance and, one need not hesitate to say, who make up in quality

what they lack in numbers. As a pastor of a large city parish once told me after the reception ceremony: "Father, those who joined the order are the best people I have in the parish," we can usually say of our men tertiaries, that they rank among our finest and staunchest Catholic laymen and can be relied on for any reasonable service for God, for the Church and their country.

The Third Order is Not a Handicap

Nor do these men find that their attachment to the order of St. Francis hinders them in the pursuit of their earthly business or secular avocations. If anything, it helps them in consequence of the habits of sobriety, self-restraint, system, consistency and persistency which the regular observance of the rule must needs beget and nurse in them.

More for Men

After all, being primarily an order of penance, the Third Order is as much, if not more adapted to men than to women, for men as a rule require penance for past sins rather more than women; and with reference to future possible sins, against which the order aims to shield its members, men are known to be exposed to greater temptations, and hence to stand in need of more powerful protection, than women.

The First Tertiary a Man

The first tertiary, clothed by St. Francis himself, was a man: the Blessed Luchesius. He induced his wife to become a penitent with him. Some of the greatest Catholic laymen since the twelfth century were very devout tertiaries. A number of the greatest living Catholic laymen today are tertiaries. In Rome, on Epiphany Day, there is held in the church of Ara Coeli, which is in charge of the Franciscan Fathers, a solemn procession in honor of the Divine Infant, or Santo Bambino. The Minister-General of the order carries a statue of the Infant in the procession. One of the most inspiring features of the procession is a numerous aggregation of tertiary men, ecclesiastics and seculars, of all grades and professions, wearing the long habit of the Third Order with unmistakable pride, joy, and satisfaction.

Wearing the Long Habit

At the International Eucharistic Congress held in Montreal, Canada, a number of years ago, the large representation of tertiary men, liveried in the long habit of the order, were conspicuous as a source of high edification in the gorgeous procession in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament. We hope our tertiary men will not be wanting in the same capacity at the forthcoming International Eucharistic Congress in Chicago in

June, 1926. At any rate we nurse the fond prospect, that not long hence it will be quite a common occurrence in our country to see substantial arrays of tertiary men gracing and lending power to our ordinary tertiary meetings as well as to extraordinary tertiary demonstrations. Even as in the gospel we are told of a man who, in consequence of a miracle wrought at his request by our Lord, believed in Jesus and together with him his whole house believed (John, 4, 53): so we want our Catholic men to lead rather than to follow their families on the Seraphic Highway to heaven.

Not a Compliment to the Order

Yet, it is urged, by far not all tertiaries are exemplary Christians. Some men and more women members of the order are by no means a compliment to, or an advertisement for the order. They are positively deterrent and repelling elements. They parade the littleness of their piety and the smallness of their religiousness in a most displeasing and disgusting manner. They are self-appointed censors of others, of the priests, Brothers and Sisters as well as of the laity, and woe to him or her who falls a prey to their bitter and venomous gossip. When such are the products of the Third Order, one ought to speak rather softly in its commendation.

Not so Bad as Painted

Above all it must be observed that, for their very profession of piety, the faults and foibles of religious people usually look bigger and worse than they are, especially to such critics as are eager to find something discreditable in those who aim at a higher life than they themselves do. On a white garment the least speck of dust is noticeable, and an ordinary spot looks ugly, whilst on a deeply colored robe a considerable blot is hardly discerned. Hence the faults of tertiaries are often exaggerated and given uncharitable and unjust prominence and emphasis. And the very ones who love to single out tertiaries for this manner of criticism are usually far guiltier of the same sin than the ones they are finding fault with. As a rule they furnish an eloquent illustration of our Lord's scathing reference to the mote and the beam.

Where There Are Saints There Are Sinners

But let the faults of tertiaries be what they may, the claim that the Third Order is composed exclusively of saints has never been made by any person of sense. The order is just a very small portion of the Church of Christ. And of His own spouse, the Church, Christ declared, that she would be like a net containing good and bad fishes, like a field bearing wheat and tares, like a group of ten virgins, five wise and five foolish.

If, in spite of all the precious Blood which He shed for her, His immaculate and unwrinkled spouse will always be made up of good and bad, why should and how can any society of the Church pretend or expect to comprise nothing but saints? Furthermore, in His own little college of the twelve apostles, which was under His immediate and personal supervision, there were at least three instances of more or less serious defection: Judas, Peter and Thomas. The proportion of unworthy members in the Third Order today is hardly higher than one fourth, if it is as high.

A Hypocritical Pretence

To pretend, then, to be discouraged from entering the Third Order because of some unlovely tertiaries is as groundless and fatuous as the excuse of non-Catholics, who claim that they are restrained from joining the true Church by the bad example of certain Catholics. Even as they should fix their attention rather on the large majority of good Catholics, who are earnestly striving to save their souls, and whose conduct is a veritable inspiration, instead of on the proportionally few bad Catholics whose behavior is an abomination: so should the critics of the order, instead of harping on isolated instances of weakness or scandal, preferably consider the great majority of exemplary tertiaries, and be inspired by the ardent and heroic manner in which they

follow St. Francis to Calvary unto Jesus Crucified, not resting until they can truly say with St. Paul and St. Francis: "I live; now not I, but Christ liveth in me. With Christ I am nailed to the cross!" Amen.

LECTURE VII.

Specious Reasons and Idle Fears

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph., 4, 30).

SOME years ago a friend of mine related how, when he was a young man, he had an opportunity of becoming independently wealthy for life. Frivolous and thoughtless as youth often is, he treated the occasion lightly and paid no attention to it, quite satisfied that many a similar opportunity would by and by present itself. None ever came. He has done hard work ever since, and will continue to work hard as long as he lives: all the consequence of the neglect of a single opportunity.

A Golden Opportunity

Possibly and probably it was a blessing for him to miss that great wealth, for riches are the ruination of many. But to miss a favorable opportunity of amassing heavenly wealth, with the risk of perhaps never having a similar one, is always an unmixed calamity, which one never lives long enough to regret. To many the call to the Third Order is this opportunity: hence the seriousness required in its handling.

"When I Am as Old as Grandma"

You say: "I realize and appreciate the value of the invitation to the Third Order, and I am fully minded to respond to it. But I am not ready as yet. Whilst I am young I want to enjoy life, for I am young but once. I like shows and dances and pretty clothes: the very things the order frowns upon. I may want a man; and a Third Order dress will hardly attract one. When I get as old as grandma, then I shall join the order of penance, too, and remain a fervent member of it until death. If I joined it now, I might regret it later on, that I entered so young."

Oh, for One Hour More of Life!

Tell me, how old do you plan to get? And how old will you get? God alone knows. A courtier had served his mighty king faithfully all the days of his life. To show appreciation of his faithful services the king told the dying courtier to ask a favor of him; whatever it was, it would be granted. The courtier asked the king to prolong his ebbing life by just one hour. The king shook his head with regret, saying: "This is one thing I can not do." Even as we can not add an inch to our stature, according to our Lord's declaration, so we can not add a minute to our life. Hence you may never get so old as grandma or reach the age you are fixing for your entrance in the order.

"I Am a Jealous God!"

But let us say you will get as old as grandma: will you then still have the grace to enter the Third Order after having trifled with and ignored it so many years? God tells us that He is a jealous God. Is it the part of a jealous lover to pursue his beloved an indefinite number of years notwithstanding her coldness, indifference and neglect? Does he not rather cast her off peremptorily and finally dismiss every thought and vestige of her forever from his mind? St. Paul assures us that God will not be mocked. One can not sport with His love and its favors. Generous as He is in tendering his priceless bounties, so sensitive He is as to their acceptance or declension. Jesus demonstrated this clearly enough in more than one instance.

Jesus Loved Him

The case of the rich young man is classical. Jesus "loved him", the gospel says. He invited the youth to leave all and follow Him. Had the young man complied with this exceptional invitation, he would have no doubt ingratiated himself strongly with the Master. He might have rivaled John and Peter in the Savior's predilection on earth and in His glory in heaven. He might have become a grand apostle, a pillar of the nascent kingdom of God on earth, and immortal in the history of the Church. His name

would be glorious in the Litany of All Saints, houses of worship the world over would be dedicated in his honor, children would receive his name in holy baptism and confirmation, Sisters and Religious Brothers and friars would take it at their clothing, and popes at their coronation.

But now, because by his earthly attachments he was induced to turn down our Lord's invitation, his name was not even handed down in history. No one knows what it was. All we know of him is, that he had about as hard a time to go to heaven as the camel has to pass through the eye of a needle. Our Lord never called him again. His one refusal finished our Savior's advances to him. Rather hearken, therefore, to the words of the prophet Isaias (55, 6): "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found: call upon Him while He is near." He may never again show Himself to you as He does now; nor may He ever be so near to you again as He now is.

You Are Young But Once

Nor can our Lord be blamed for such conduct. As you say, you are young but once. Why not therefore dedicate this one youth, when the heart is fresh and warm and generous and unreserved in its attachment and devotion, to God, Who made it and endowed it with its capacity for love and happiness and joy, and Who alone in the end will

fully satisfy it, quench its thirst for contentment, and sate its ravenous hunger for love?

Whatever is bright and cheery in your life, whatever is sweetly thrilling, exciting and satisfying, whatever is beautiful and noble and grand, whatever is true and solid and substantial: your parents, home, friends, health, reputation, work, success and good fortune: all has been and is given you by the good, gracious, benevolent and beneficent God. Is it, therefore, just and meet on your part to repay Him, Who gives joy to your youth, by giving Him as little as possible of this very youth, and by bestowing its best feature, your heart's first love, upon the fleeting and treacherous joys of the world, which will not fail to return chagrin for devotion, disillusionment for attachment, and remorse for consecration?

The present Holy Father, Pius XI, celebrated the golden jubilee of his profession as a Franciscan tertiary in 1925. He was a young man of seventeen years when he finished his novitiate. He glories in the fact, and thanks God, that he was privileged to become a son of St. Francis so soon and to remain faithful so long.

Bones and Rinds

If some one invited you to a banquet and, after taking the fleshmeat for himself, he would offer you the bones; and at the dessert he would press the fruit, take the juice himself, and give you the

rinds or peals and empty fibres: would you feel complimented and gratified and be in a mood to love and reward your host for his conduct? Or, rather, would you not be highly displeased and grievously insulted? Why, then, do you want to treat God in so ungracious a manner, and offer Him your heart only after it is through with the world, and the world is through with it, and when it turns to Him merely because no one else or nothing else cares to have it or its love? Will not its attachment to Him then appear forced and strained rather than spontaneous and natural?

Poetry, Romance and Love

Youth is the period of poetry, romance and love, of natural as well as supernatural love. It is the season of high resolves, noble aspirations and godlike endeavor. It seethes with ambition, yearns for adventures, and burns for conquests. Hence, if you do not rise to high flights of the love of God, of virtue and holiness when you are young, especially when the grace of God is upon you with exceptional appeal and warmth as it is now, there is little prospect that you will attain a high mark in goodness later in life. St. Francis was a young man when he answered the call of God. Had he neglected it when it came to him, he might never have been heard of in history again. "Behold *Now* is the acceptable time." The only safe moment for the use of grace is the

present: *Now*. The future is always indefinite, uncertain and untrustworthy.

At the Parting of the Ways

Even the ancient heathens recognized and appreciated the fact that youth ordinarily is the period of determination for the whole life of man. The mythical Hercules was still in the years of adolescence when he came to the parting of the ways or courses of life. One was strewn with flowers: the soft and luring path of pleasure; the other was the thorny and stony road of virtue. He chose the latter, and proceeded to immortality. Why do you hesitate to do the same whilst the choosing is good?

Gain and Loss

But let us allow, that you will live to be as old as grandma, and that in His infinite goodness God will then give you the same grace to join the Third Order which He gives you today, and that you will respond to it fully: what will you have gained by having waited so long to become a religious in the world? Nothing, whatever; but you will have lost much by the delay. I have had considerable experience in Third Order work. I know of no faithful member who ever regretted having entered the order too young; I have had a number of members to tell me, however, that they

wished they had joined the order earlier in life than they did.

Sweet Memories and Bitter Regrets

And what would a person who has been a child of St. Francis, let us say for about forty or fifty years, have to regret? That she said twelve Our Fathers every day? or that she daily did a little penance by wearing the scapular and cord? or that she went to Holy Communion and attended a religious conference without fail every month? or that she was uniformly modest and reserved in her attire? or that she stayed away from dangerous shows and dances? or that she was charitable to the sick and needy? or that she gained countless indulgences for herself and the Poor Souls? When they grow old, these are not the things Catholics regret. What they do regret is having spent the best part of their life in vain and transitory pursuits to the neglect of prayer and godliness, and not having shunned dangers which in the sequel proved disastrous to their virtue and piety. A good way for you to spare yourself this bitter regret in old age, is to enlist in the army of the Little Poor Man of Assisi right away.

The Queen of Saba

Far from causing you any regrets later on in life this step will provide you with the joyous

surprise the Queen of Saba felt and eloquently expressed at seeing King Solomon in his glory (3 Kings, 10, 6 ecc.). You will say, too, concerning the Order of St. Francis: "The report is true, which I heard—and I did not believe them that told me, till I came myself, and saw with my own eyes, and have found that the half hath not been told me: thy wisdom and thy works exceed the fame which I heard."

"I Like Shows and Dances and Pretty Clothes"

"I like shows and dances and pretty clothes." Tell me: What kind of shows and dances do you like? Are they of the vile and obscene kind, at which decent people will not be seen, and which degrade and corrupt the hearts and minds of those who are present or take part in them? "No, indeed!" you say with indignation, "my very instinct and native sense of purity revolt at the very thought of such vulgarity and immodesty. I should be ashamed to be seen at the display of such infamy. The shows and dances I like are proper and nice; they have the endorsement of good and conscientious people; they ennoble while they refresh and exhilarate the mind; in a word, they are a virtuous diversion and an honorable recreation of body and soul." If such is the case, the Third Order does not object at all to your taking part in them. Go to as many as you like.

Styles and Fashions

And as to clothes and fashions, do you affect or ambition styles that are extreme, sensational and quite suggestive of a lack of feminine delicacy and modesty, and perhaps even of dishonorable designs in the wearer? Again you solemnly protest saying: "By all means, no! I should not be seen on the street clothed in a dress that intimated the least want of decency. The dress I like is neat, pretty and charming and quite in fashion; altogether according to my means, however, and station in life; and perfectly modest and becoming a lady of refinement and innate purity." If such is your leaning for nice clothes, the Third Order permits you to indulge it without hindrance or remonstrance.

Solomon and the Wooden Horse

King Solomon was inspired when he pronounced the glittering things and beguiling pleasures of this world to be nothing but vanity of vanities.

The old story of the wooden horse, in the body of which soldiers were secreted, and through which, when in their simplicity the Trojans drew it into the city, at the expense of their town gate and walls, the Greeks finally captured Troy and its inhabitants, is also a telling symbol of the treachery of earthly quests and ambitions. Many a Catholic youth or maiden wonders what some worldly prospect will mean to him or her,

and goes after it with might and main. Alas, often it turns out to be a mere treacherous monster, big with temporal and eternal disaster for the unfortunate aspirant.

Why Wear That Piece of Cloth?

"The only thing that keeps me from joining the Third Order is the scapular and cord. I dislike the idea of being bothered with wearing them. Besides, I can not see what that little piece of dark cloth, if you will allow the expression, has to do with one's sanctification and salvation." If you want it so, the scapular is but a little cloth. But to it the words of St. Paul apply: "For see your vocation, brethern, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Cor., 1, 26-29). And also the glowing words of Jesus come to mind: "I give thanks to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt., 11, 25).

We Must Suffer Here or Hereafter

Hence the very wearing of this cloth is a meritorious profession of humble faith as well as an act of penance and mortification. The scapular and cord, it is true, involve a certain amount of discomfort and inconvenience. They were never intended to be vehicles of sensible pleasure and delight. Our Lord tells us that, unless we do penance, we shall all perish. It is therefore wise to bind oneself to a daily and continuous practice of a definite penance, in order to make sure of performing at least enough to keep us from perishing. And by its very essence, penance is uncomfortable and inconvenient to nature; otherwise it would be no penance. Looking at it from this viewpoint, too, many tertiaries are glad, that the scapular and cord have not been substituted by a medal. They have learned to love the penitential feature of it and would not want to do without it.

A Glorious Garb

The tertiary scapular may be and look like a trivial thing in itself, but its historical associations render it precious and lovable. Being the uniform of the great St. Francis, it was drenched as it were by the holy blood that oozed from the sacred wounds which our Lord had formed on the body of his beloved Francis. Hence the sweet and tender veneration by which this precious emblem is

cherished by all the true sons and daughters of the saint. Far from being an unpleasant burden or a discomfiting appendage, the uniform of the Order of Penance is to them, because of their appreciation of its meaning and value, a sweet and dear token, from which it would pain them keenly to be parted for ever so little a while.

To Be a Good Christian Is Enough

"If one is a good Christian, it is enough; and that is what I am trying to be; I feel I can be it without being a tertiary." Well enough; and that is exactly the one object of the Third Order, to make a good Catholic out of you, and to keep you so to the end. Its rule aims at nothing else; but this much it will accomplish quickly and lastingly, if you give it a chance. It is true, you can pray and do the other things the rule prescribes, at your leisure and pleasure, without being a member of the order. But the question is: will you do them regularly and perseveringly without being a member? And will you have as much grace to do them without being a member?

Do You Want a Raise?

And even if you did all the rule prescribed without having joined the order, you would not gain the many indulgences and other rich spiritual benefits which are conditioned by actual membership. And this is a weighty consideration. How

keen you would be, were a material profit involved. Suppose in your place of work the manager would approach you tomorrow, saying: "I have a mind to increase your wages. You are to do the same work you have been doing, but instead of thirty dollars a week I want to give you fifty. Tell me when I should start with the raise." Would you say: "Sir, please do not start today, but let me think the matter over. It will be time if you give me that raise after ten or twenty years?" Indeed, not; on the contrary you would cry out: "Begin with the raise at once, sir!" Why not act so rapidly and instantaneously when God is willing to raise materially your heavenly wages?

Whenever St. Aloysius was in doubt as to what he should do in a given instance, he solved the doubt at once by asking himself: "What will this thing mean for me in eternity?" And his decision never went wrong. Why not employ the same test in your case?

He Hands You Five Dollar Bills

"But why should there be so vast a difference in the celestial reward merely for being a member of the order?" Let me reply to this by an illustration. Imagine that some one is generous to you according to his pleasure and as the mood seizes him. Every now and then he gives you a five dollar bill without, however, observing a fixed

time or method in his giving. Of a sudden he binds himself to a regular system in his bounties to you and tells you, that he will give you a five dollar bill each week without fail, and in addition to that he will give you other presents in keeping with his moods; but the five weekly dollars would never fail. Would this not please you more than his previous irregularity and haphazardness? Similarly God is more pleased, if you bind yourself to a certain regular exercise of love towards Him, than if you let your service of Him be dependent upon your momentary inclination or disinclination.

You Edify Others

Moreover, by being a loyal member of the Third Order, you will thereby give much edification and stimulation to others, and get credit for the good works resulting from your good example. In unity there is strength. By being exhibited by several at one time, good example also increases wondrously in power as well as in merit.

A Diamond for a Quarter

"I am very much in favor of the Third Order, and I intend to enter it as soon as my friend, or my husband, or my wife makes up his or her mind to do the same." But why must you wait for another, instead of the other following you? Rather take the lead and get the credit for both.

In material things you are not so dependent upon the good will or decision of another. Let us picture to ourselves a jeweler in your city offering you a bargain sale in genuine and fine diamonds. He would say: "Here are five sterling diamonds of a carat each; you can have them for twenty-five cents apiece." Would you hesitate and say: "I like the diamonds and want them very much; but I must first ask my friend or my consort to see if he or she will buy some, too." You would not. You would unhesitatingly say: "Give me the diamonds at once!" Why not act thus with regard to the pearl of eternal value?

Husband and Wife

The rule directs, it is true, that a married woman should have the permission of her husband before becoming a member of the order. But nowadays a husband can hardly have any reasonable objection to his wife's enrolment in the order; and an unreasonable objection need not be considered and is easily overruled by a dispensation from the director, unless unpleasant consequences are to be feared. Usually, if there is danger of the husband being unduly incensed at his wife's intention of becoming a tertiary, it is wise for her, with the consent of the director of the confraternity, to enter the order as a silent member without saying anything about it to her

husband. And no harm will be done. We are living in the days of equal rights.

True Love Not Only Dreams, But Acts

"If ever I want to join a religious order, it will be a real and true and strict one, and not merely a makeshift of an order as the Third Order is." There are many persons who say similarly: "If ever I enter the convent, it will be the strictest one there is." They are those who never enter any convent. They speak hypocritically and insincerely. If you actually join a strict order, you do better than if you merely joined the Third Order. But as long as you are not aligning yourself to a more rigorous order, you will do well in being enrolled in the Order of Penance. You will thus show a good will to do what you can for God in your present circumstances, and as a result He may soon give you the grace to become a member of a strict order. It means nothing to dream what you might do under conditions that do not exist, for instance, if you were in China you might like to be martyred for Christ: what counts is what you do in your actual situation and according to your present capacity. True love not only dreams, but acts.

The Third Order and Your Parish Church

"But the Third Order will take me away from my parish church and kill my interest in it; yet

to it I owe my first allegiance." If properly understood and practiced, membership in the Third Order but renders Catholics more fervent and devoted parishioners. It increases their love and attachment to their parish, and their interest in its various works and enterprises. Even as St. Francis was told by our Lord to repair the little church of St. Damian, and as he was seen by Pope Innocent III in a vision to hold up the cathedral of the world, the Church of St. John Lateran, so each tertiary who has the spirit of St. Francis cheerfully contributes towards the maintenance of and, according to his capacity, serves as a pillar and support to his own parish church.

On the other hand, however, the same seraphic spirit will hinder him from being selfishly local in his interest and contributions, and from restricting them to his little parish church exclusively: a narrow policy which, if it were universally followed, would soon nullify the very catholicity of the true Church of Christ, even as it belies the charity which Jesus declared to be the first and foremost commandment. Tertiaries must be Good Samaritans, not circumscribing their love of their neighbor by color, race, language, geographical or other lines.

Where Is the Social Work?

"If the Third Order systematically pursued a certain kind of social or charitable work, I should

gladly become an enthusiastic member of it; as it is, it seems to have no definite purpose: hence my lack of interest in it." The one primary purpose of the Third Order is the personal sanctification of its members. This is a big enough purpose for anyone, and quite enough to to keep any tertiary comfortably interested and busy all the days of his life. Whatever secondary purposes fall in with this primary purpose, in the way of charitable, social or religious work, according to times and circumstances, must enlist the tertiary's sympathy and receive his attention and service. No good work, given the proper conditions, is foreign to him privately, or to his order corporately. He is to be ready always to join the vanguard of the army of the Lord, under rightful jurisdiction and direction. That the conduct of tertiaries measures up to this view, many experienced and grateful pastors as well as directors will gladly bear witness.

Secret Enrolment

"If I could join the order secretly and unbeknown to others, I should gladly do it. I hate the publicity of the reception. People will comment on it. They will observe me closely in consequence and always be on hand with their criticisms regarding my conduct. I shall not be able to go to any place of amusement, or allow myself any indulgence in the fashions of the day,

without at once being the object of cutting censure. I do not enjoy this prospect: hence my hesitation about becoming a member."

Jesus Died in the Open

When Jesus decided to die for you, He could have done so in a hidden place, entirely away from the sight and knowledge of men. But His love for you prompted Him to choose the most conspicuous place, near the most populous city, and the most frequented feast for His ignominious death on your behalf. Do you want to reward Him, therefore, by joining the seraphic lovers of His Cross in secret, and in fear lest the world might find out about it?

There May Be Reasons

Perhaps there are the strongest reasons why you, personally, should enter the order publicly in the presence of your relatives, friends and acquaintances. Your conduct in the past has not been, even in public, what it should have been. Often it was quite disedifying, if not positively scandalous. Is it not time for you publicly to disown that part of it, and to recall and repair the sinister consequences of it by openly accepting the garb of the Order of Penance?

You Will Be Watched

You will no doubt be watched and criticised if you become a tertiary. But this may be the best

thing that can happen to you to know and be conscious that your conduct is being closely observed, and is likely to be sharply commented on by others. This will be for you a powerful moral check and a stimulant to virtue. Possibly your main misfortune in the past was a sort of happy-go-lucky and don't-care attitude, which ignored or sneered at the most justified and called-for vituperations. You ought to be glad to have an occasion henceforth to gain the approbation of others at least in the same degree as you formerly incurred their condemnation.

Back to Noah's Ark

You remember the story of the dove which Noah sent out to investigate if it was wise to land. Today Chinese and Japanese mariners are said to use birds to find the direction of the nearest land. When they are given the air by the seamen these birds fly about for a while to get their bearings, and then instinctively veer directly and swiftly towards land, thereby giving the clue to the sailors. Equally a soul on the sea of this world which follows the instinct of heavenly grace, coming to it in the form of a call to the Third Order of St. Francis, does not hesitate a moment, but no sooner it realizes the attraction it makes directly for heaven on the Seraphic Highway, under the leadership of the Assisian Elias. Amen.

LECTURE VIII.

Who Will Win the War?

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job, 7, 1).

THE followers of St. Francis are often called the seraphic army. Their General is Jesus Christ Crucified. Their captain is St. Francis. The fight they are engaged in is the most important and consequential imaginable. Their temporal and eternal liberty and welfare are at stake. If they win, they will forever be children of God and heirs of heaven: if they lose, they will be the slaves of the devil and the prisoners of hell for all eternity. Hence the seriousness of the situation, and the need of being always conscious of it, in order never, not even for a moment, to take this war of wars —Job calls life on earth a warfare— lightly or frivolously.

The Devil Is Crafty

The first ruse of the devil is to beguile the Christian to attach little, if any importance to the battle that is being fought, in order to catch him unawares and completely overcome him ere he realizes what it is all about.

The Uniform Is a Continual Reminder

To obviate this possible and most disastrous error on your part, you have enlisted in the army of Francis, the various insignia, regulations and activities of which render it quite impossible to forget or lose sight of the grand purpose of the war you are waging. Your very uniform, the scapular and the cord, continually remind you of the need of watchfulness and loyalty on your part to insure momentary as well as ultimate victory for your cause.

Various Occupations, But Only One Aim

In an army there are various departments or divisions, such as cavalry and infantry; and to each division is assigned a particular kind of work: yet all cooperate towards the same aim—the routing of the enemy and final conquest. So the army of Francis is composed of various parts, each of which pursues a definite line of work: the friars preach, the Poor Clares devote themselves to contemplation, the Third Order Brothers and Sisters, regular as well as secular, devote themselves to various works of charity and piety; yet all converge towards the same aim: to make the world safe and solid for Jesus Christ Crucified.

"Woe to Him That Is Alone"

In waging war it is a distinct advantage to be a member of an army that has an able leader, and

the soldiers of which are well trained and inured to discipline. One hundred well drilled fighters easily vanquish a thousand untrained warriors. And as to one fighting all alone the Bible passes sentence on his fate when it says: "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up" (Eccl., 4, 10).

An Earnest of Victory

The vocation to the Order of Penance is therefore an earnest of victory for its beneficiary. He gets the benefit of wonderful and successful leadership, and the help of a well disciplined and skillfully trained company. If under such circumstances victory does not come his way, he has only himself to blame, and he proves himself undeserving of the privilege granted him. A soldier can become disloyal in, and a deserter from the most valorous and victorious army. So much the worse for him. Hence the need of the tertiary's keeping his sense of responsibility keen. The call to the seraphic army is not only a privilege, but also a source of added responsibility.

The Blockade Wins Wars

Wars are won in various ways; but the most frequent method of victory is the blockade. The terrible world war, of whose bitterness we have tasted, was ended by the blockade more than by anything else. The war that is being waged for

our immortal soul will be respectively won or lost by us depending upon an effective blockade employed either by us or by our enemy, the devil. By a blockade we mean the process of cutting another off from the source of his supplies.

The Devil Is an Expert at the Blockade

From the very beginning the devil has been using the blockade to subdue countless souls and render them helpless against his assaults. God is the base of supplies for the human soul in the supernatural as well as in the natural order. The devil therefore aims to cut or turn the soul away from God, or to place a barrier between God and the soul in order to stop the course of provisions which the soul needs. He conquered our first parents, for example, by injecting a doubt into their minds as to God's veracity and sincerity. He no sooner succeeded with this obstruction or blockade when he achieved a complete victory over them.

St. Francis Outclasses the Devil

It is the part of an able and experienced captain or leader to foresee and forestall the tricks of the enemy before they are put into effect. Experienced spiritual strategist that he was, St. Francis anticipated, and prepared his followers against the various forms of spiritual blockade by which

Satan attempts to ensnare and overcome souls. It will make you appreciate more than ever the wisdom and value of the Third Order rule, and it will stimulate you to observe it closer and better, if we now turn the spotlight of investigation on some of the points of the satanic blockade.

"The Just Man Liveth by Faith"

The first attempt of the devil in effecting a blockade between the soul and its God is directed, as it was in the case of our first parents, against faith. He does not of a sudden suggest to the Christian soul to deny or question the fundamental truths of the faith, but slyly and gradually he tries to wean it away from the supernatural viewpoint of life. He whispers that too much religion is not good, and that the external profession of piety is no longer in keeping with the spirit of the times. If he succeeds in convincing the soul of this, it will not be long when he will have decoyed it into an independent and dangerous attitude regarding the faith.

"The Foolish Things of This World Hath God Chosen"

The tertiary rule forestalls this blockade by imposing the wearing of the scapular and cord. This requires a childlike and docile faith in the external symbols of the Church, in its power of

granting indulgences and of creating spiritual solidarity among souls. Whoever implicity bows in faith to these features of his religion, runs no risk of becoming noxiously liberal or weak in his holy faith.

"You Must Always Pray and Never Faint"

Faith, the foundation of Christian life, is especially nourished and maintained by prayer. Once the devil gets a soul to discontinue and neglect prayer, its faith will soon go a-glimmering. Moreover prayer is the ordinary means of procuring from God the supernatural help the soul continually needs. The stoppage of prayer, therefore, usually means the cessation of the necessary heavenly supplies for the soul, and consequently utter spiritual defeat and ruin. It is, then, not at all surprising, that the devil employs all his craftiness to beguile a soul into a disuse of prayer. Succeeding in this, he has an easy game to play unto the total conquest of that poor soul. The pretexts he commonly uses are the lack of time, the stress of business and work, weariness and unsteadiness of the mind and body, various and unpleasant distractions and absorptions during prayer, the obvious uselessness of prayer, and so on: just so on some apparently plausible ground he keeps the soul from praying, and thus getting into communication with God, its base of supplies.

By Prayer the Soul Connects with God

This terribly insidious and perilous blockade the rule of the order meets and obviates by the obligation of the daily office consisting of twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorys, and by insisting on the saying of grace at meals. No one who prays so much each day will ever be cut off for any length of time, or long enough to cause him much damage, from his source of heavenly help. His soul will always be amply supplied, in the form of grace, with the food and ammunition it requires effectually to withstand, and gloriously to overcome every attack of the enemy.

"My God and My All!"

On one of his missionary tours St. Francis had to spend a night in the same room with a merchant who was altogether engrossed in the things of this world. They said their night prayer together and retired.

Thinking that his partner was asleep the saint arose from his couch, knelt down, stretched out his arms and prayed with all the ardor of his soul. It was not a vocal but a mental prayer, yet it so possessed Francis, that every now and then he would sigh as from the deepest depths of his being and say: "O my God and my all!" Observing this in silent admiration the merchant said to himself: "Oh, if I only could love God thus!" By imitating our holy father in prayer we shall

make the devil despair of ever wresting us away from God.

The Food of the Strong, the Nourishment of the Weak

After prayer nothing confirms the soul in grace and virtue so much as the worthy reception of Holy Communion and the devout attendance at Holy Mass. Knowing this, Satan does his utmost to keep the soul from these divine founts of strength. He begins by suggesting a postponement of confession for this reason or that: the weather, a visit to be made or received, the difficulty of going to confession because of the large crowd of penitents, the absence of one's regular confessor, a slight indisposition, a lack of the mood to approach the holy tribunal, etc. The same or similar reasons he urges for the absence from Holy Mass and other services of devotion. At the moment they sound reasonable enough, but if they are acceded to once and again, the result will be a sad blockade from God for the gullible and unfortunate soul.

Close to God and Sure of Heaven

The tertiary rule makes strong provision against this artful strategy of the devil by its regulation of monthly Communion and its counsel of daily assistance at Mass, where this is conveniently possible, and finally by its urging the participa-

tion at the monthly meeting of the order. Here, too, it is true that the soul which conscientiously complies with these points of the rule will always remain comfortably close to God and sure of heaven.

Crowd Psychology

As regards the monthly tertiary meeting a word deserves to be added. Conscious of the stimulation there is in regularly meeting and associating with good religious persons the enemy of souls aims to keep Christians away as much as possible from such association. Crowd psychology is a powerful factor either for good or for evil. A certain indefinable influence seems to pass from soul to soul in close communication, even outside and beyond the influence of the external example.

Ablaze with Passion: Aflame with Love

Hence it is easy to become ablaze with evil passion among a rabble of wicked thinkers and doers, and it is commensurably easy to grow aflame with the love of virtue and godliness in a crowd of God-loving and clean living people. Consequently as intent as the devil is on herding sinners together and in keeping good people apart—again to effect his blockade of the soul so assiduous the Third Order is in having its members meet periodically in religious communion and conference for their mutual edification and perseverance in grace,

and in keeping them away from the company of the godless and the wicked.

"One Heart and One Soul"

Instinctively, therefore, every zealous tertiary loves the monthly meeting. More than anything else it gives him the assurance, that he pertains to a religious order and derives from it the benefits of spiritual solidarity, in the way of animation and inspiration. Eagerly he looks forward to it, as it offers him the opportunity of meeting his brothers and sisters in St. Francis, and of being renewed in the seraphic spirit again. In missionary districts, where they must often live alone, friars of the First Order deplore it as their greatest personal hardship, that they can not meet their brethren oftener: so much do they, too, feel the necessity of mutual stimulation and edification. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 132, 1.)

The First and Greatest Command

Of all the virtues, theological and moral, charity or love reigns supreme; first the love of God, then the love of our fellowmen. To keep the love of God in our hearts, the love of our neighbor is a very potent and reliable means. In view of this the devil, in introducing his blockade, labors to render the soul indifferent to the bodily and spiritual needs of its fellows, whilst it says coldly

and selfishly: "Am I my brother's keeper?" A swift method to tear oneself away from God is to keep aloof from sympathy and charity for God's image—man.

It Works Both Ways

The Third Order rule protects its followers against this calamity by enjoining real, practical, ready and speedy relief, corporal as well as spiritual, of the poor and needy. Every member of the order knows and feels that he is every other member's brother or sister in want and distress of body and soul. The rule works both ways, however. If he is asked to render help to others when they need it, he is in his turn assured of charitable and substantial assistance when he requires it. In either case the devil's blockade will not affect him.

The Tertiary's Testament

This applies too, to the very wise provision of the rule anent the making of a will or a testament. Its prudent observance will preclude many an uncharitable friction or rupture, which might estrange souls from God and salvation forever.

The Most Frequent Snare

It is a matter of very sad but daily observation and experience, that most souls are irretrivably drawn away from God through irreligious and

immoral literature and pictures, and by means of immodest fashions, indecent dances and obscene shows and other unclean diversions and amusements. They are the devil's favorite hunting grounds where his victims are innumerable. Once he gets a soul to indulge or divert itself in these departments, there will soon be a barrier between it and God, and it will forego all the powerful avenues of communication with God, such as prayer, the frequentation of the sacraments and the like. The result is complete alienation from God and the forfeiture of every prospect of attaining a place in His kingdom.

St. Francis Guards His Own

It is not astonishing, therefore, that in his rule St. Francis puts his children on their guard against these deleterious influences, and warns them not to trifle with danger lest they perish therein. Whoever heeds his salutary cautions in this regard will save himself much bitter regret in the future and, in compensation, from his conscientious compliance with the holy rule he will derive greater and sweeter pleasures than the world can give.

The Rule Blocks the Devil

Directly or indirectly the rule of the Third Order, on its part, plans to establish an effective blockade against the ruling passion of each

member, so it will not get free reins to run loose and wild, and plunge its victims into temporal and eternal destruction. To achieve and hold this essential blockade the rule imposes the daily examination of conscience. If it is consistently and closely watched and curbed, no ruling passion will ever evade or escape the soul's firm and stubborn blockade.

Who Endures the Longest Wins

Whenever two inimical forces are trying to compel each other to unconditional surrender through the blockade, the one whose watchfulness is unintermittent, and whose persistency outlasts the others' even for ever so brief a period, will be sure to win the war. This reflection cautions us against even a momentary relaxation in our vigilance against the enemy's tactics, and urges us, trusting in the unfailing and all-powerful help of God, to persevere unflinchingly to the end in the faithful observance of the holy rule.

Unrelenting

But such is the hatred and tenacity of the archfiend of our souls, that even after he has lost the battle against the soul he still tries to make it feel the sting and venom of his hostility. After the tertiary has died in the state of grace, and for some reason is detained in purgatory, Satan is busy in engaging the surviving relatives and friends in

idle and showy demonstrations of sorrow, which feed their vanity more than they relieve the soul of the deceased one, and he tries his best to keep them from offering prayers and Holy Masses and indulgences for the dear departed.

Deliverance Is at Hand

Yet the rule of the order has made satisfactory arrangements against this ruse or blockade also. By the pious and influential suffrages of the three entire orders the world over, the suffering tertiary's poor soul may look forward to an early, if not an immediate release from its purgatorial pains.

St. Francis Has His Day

Pious tradition in the Order of Penance is authority for the belief that, in consequence of having been so generous and obliging to the suffering souls in his lifetime, God accorded St. Francis the extraordinary privilege, by virtue of which he may descend into purgatory on each anniversary of his death, and liberate all souls of his sons and daughters, of the three orders, detained there, no matter under what sentence. Whatever may be the weight or value of this tradition or legend, it seems safe as well as pious to believe that the soul of a Franciscan consigned to purgatory will hardly linger in the painful dungeon beyond the first feast of St. Francis or of Portiuncula, after its imprisonment.

They Bleed and Die – For What?

On this earth what indescribable labors, hardships, pains and sacrifices do men not submit to in order to fight the wars of earthly rulers, who often aim mainly at their personal glory and aggrandizement! And these rulers frequently take no active part at all in the toils of the war, but indulge their ease and comfort, if not their voluptuousness, while the men are bleeding and dying on the battle-fields for their rulers' cause.

And what will be the reward of these men for their heroism, in case they survive the fray at all? A word of praise, a slap of congratulation on the shoulder, or possibly a medal or other token of distinction, or a promotion to a higher rank. But what does it all amount to after all? And where is the reward of the greatest heroes, who usually die in the brunt of the battle?

How different the situation of those who fight for Christ under the leadership of St. Francis! They have but to be inspired by and to follow their General and their captain to proceed to certain victory and an unfading crown of substantial glory.

"I Have Fought the Good Fight"

At all events, engaged as we are in the greatest and most important of wars, against a fierce and implacable enemy, let us remember the words of our Lord that the kingdom of heaven suffereth

violence, and that only the violent attain it. If we are always mindful of them, we shall be able at death to say with the great fighter of Christ, St. Paul the apostle: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day" (2 Tim., 4, 7, 8). Amen.

LECTURE IX.

The Seraph of Love

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal., 6, 14).

THIS is the ecstatic cry of the ardent soul of a man who at last, after a series of bitter disappointments and illusionments, has found complete rest, peace, happiness and joy of heart. Ere he discovered the source of inexhaustible heavenly bliss which is hidden in the Cross of Christ, Francis had endeavored to quench his thirst for happiness in the frivolous and deceitful pleasures and amusements of the world. He had actually gloried in their enjoyment and in the prominent part he had in them. But the glory in every instance proved illusory and short-lived, and he always had reason to regret and to repent of it.

Love at First Sight

When, however, the sweet grace of God turned his mind's gaze and his heart's love to Jesus Crucified as his Comforter, Leader, Lover and Beloved One, it was not long before he was enraptured by this new love, entranced and helplessly possessed. It

was for him an unwonted and ravishing sensation, to which he could not but surrender himself body and soul once for all, without reservation or measure. It was in the best sense of the word love at first sight without the disturbing element of superficiality and consequent inconstancy such love frequently discloses. Francis was convinced his love of the Crucified One would be abiding and final and was never to make room for any other. Hence he rapturously and triumphantly exclaims: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal., 6, 14). From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me; for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body" (Ib. 17). In modern parlance this means: "'I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me' (Cant., 6, 2,) and let all else go by!"

He Tells the World

Francis does not embrace and carry the Cross of Christ under compulsion; nor does he merely tolerate and put up with it more or less reluctantly; but he actually and sincerely glories in it. His soul expands, his heart burns and his entire being thrills at the very thought of it. The warmth and strength of his love do not permit it to remain hidden. He is forced to tell the world of it. In no saint's life were more verified the prophetic words of our Lord: "And I, if I be lifted up from

the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John 12, 32). If ever a saint was drawn to the Cross of Christ by sheer and irresistible love it was Francis. And if ever, since the time of the apostles, there has been an instance of a love that was mutual in the highest degree, both parties being both active and receptive, attractive and responsive, Jesus Crucified and Francis offer this example.

The "Seraph" Among Men

This explains why in the unanimous consensus of his comtemporaries as well as of all subsequent centuries St. Francis has deserved and received the title of "Seraph", indicating that he was lost, absorbed and had entirely vanished in the love of His divine Friend. And in this love Francis had reason to glory, since it rendered sweet and delightful to him not only the rigorous abstention from all earthly pastimes and diversions, but also the practice of the most rigorous mortifications and castigations, as well as the endurance of very painful and chronic bodily diseases and afflictions. Finally this very love rendered his death peaceful, happy and sweet. He cried out with his great exemplar, St. Paul: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" (Philipp., 1, 21.)

Nature Is Strong: Grace Is Stronger

To a worldly-minded man it seems quite unnatural and therefore impossible to renounce

completely the goods and pleasures of the world; he judges that, whoever attempts it from religious motives must be under a continual constraint, struggling as he is against the potent penchants of nature, which is known never to relent in its purposes and never to resign its propensities.

This view were possibly correct by and large, were there no supernatural order and no grace of God. As it is, grace supersedes and is more forceful than nature; consequently it benignly yet decidedly overrules nature's strongest leanings, or rather gives them a higher aim and a sacred expression.

For Him It Was Mere Refuse

St. Paul utters this pregnantly when he says: "Furthermore I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ" (Philipp., 3, 8). He spoke sincerely and meant every word he said. Over against his all-absorbing love of Jesus Crucified the richest and most magnificent and luring things of the earth were divested of all fascination and power of attraction, and they assumed the appearance of something vile, repellent and revolting, such as dung and filth, in his estimation.

Who Is in Love Is Blind to Everything Else

From his love of Jesus Crucified St. Francis had conceived the same low appraisal and the same decided abhorrence of the world's empty and fleeting possessions and joys. Hence his ease and delight in their absolute and final renunciation. A man engrossed by a great life's love pays no attention, for instance, to ash cans or garbage bins standing along the street. Their contents beget in him feelings of spontaneous nausea and irreconcilable aversion. Such was the confirmed attitude of Francis towards the world and what it stands for after he had fallen in love with, and tasted the sweetness of the Cross of Christ.

His Was Not a Unique Experience

Nor was the experience of St. Francis regarding the sweetening power of the Cross a solitary or unique phenomenon. Before and since his time it has been the common and continual portion of all God-loving souls. It was only more noticeable in Francis because in him it reached so high and unusual a degree. As in every other department of human life and endeavor there are also in holiness such as we call geniuses who attain extraordinary heights far beyond the ordinary run of saints. St. Francis was a genius among geniuses of sanctity, especially in his love of Jesus Crucified. He owed his wondrous achievements

and success primarily to the grace of God; secondarily to his cooperation with this grace.

Everybody Feels It

To restrict our reflection to the seraphic family, each one of the followers of St. Francis in his three orders, from the thirteenth century to the twentieth, in his or her own measure and capacity, has felt and feels today the exhilarating and animating influence of the Cross of Christ. It is this influence that attracts candidates to the orders and renders their affiliation and compliance with the rules pleasant and enjoyable.

The Charm Is Hidden from the World

The world does and can not understand, what otherwise sensible people see in the lowly scapular and cord so as to be induced to wear them and glory in them, to be restrained by them from the indulgence in pleasures which nature insistently craves, and to be prompted by them to practices from which the flesh shrinks, simply because the world does not comprehend, and does not want to comprehend the sweetness of the Cross of Christ and its winning and all-conquering power over those who yield and surrender themselves implicitly to its charm.

Whenever people who are called to the Order of Penance hesitate and halt and higgle and haggle about entering it; and when such who are already

members of the order find its regulations and prohibitions difficult of observance, it is an obvious sign, that they either have not yet sensed, or that they have got away from the heavenly magnetism of Jesus Crucified. He is willing and eager to draw them unto Himself, but they are interposing their coldness, or indifference, or some undue attachment to creatures, which diminishes or nullifies the divine current of moral power directed towards, and ready to encompass them.

He Was Hot In Winter

St. Peter Alcantara, a close double of his father St Francis in many ways, was so inflamed with the love of Jesus Crucified, that his heart literally burned with love, so much so that in the coldest winter he had to throw open not only the window of his cell but also the very bosom of his habit to get relief from the consuming ardor of his love.

Many tertiaries, however, would improve and increase their love for Jesus and, consequently, their love of the seraphic life, by shutting the windows of their soul, their eyes and ears particularly, to the vanities, and their hearts to the love, of the world. If they only gave the love of Jesus a good chance to grow in their hearts and thoroughly leaven their souls, the world, from whose vanities they find it so hard to abstain, would soon leave them cold and unattracted.

The Sacred Spear

In the history of the Crusades we read that at one stage of the war, when the Christian soldiers in Palestine were quite disheartened and dismayed because of the vastly superior numbers of the enemy, Baldwin, the great captain of the Lord, happened to find the Spear which pierced our Lord's side after His death. Holding it aloft with reverence and inspiration before his men he said: "Christian soldiers, behold the hallowed instrument, which caused the last drop of our Lord's Precious Blood to flow upon the holy soil of Palestine. Is it to witness our discouragement and defeat in the defense of this consecrated ground?" By these eloquent words and by the sight of the venerated Lance the army of Christ was inflamed with enthusiasm and bravery to a pitch of unbounded heroism; and the result was a complete and unconditional victory for the doughty defenders of the faith.

A Pet Glory

It is one of the pet glories of the Franciscan Order from its very inception to have most religiously and lovingly guarded, often at the greatest sacrifices, the holy places and scenes of our Lord's sojourn upon this earth. In addition to that the sons of St. Francis have been instrumental in introducing in, and in propagating over

the whole world the meditation on the Passion and death of our Lord in the form of the Stations or the Way of the Cross. Its devout and regular exercise, outside of the very many and substantial indulgences attached to it, will not fail to act on the spirit of the tertiary as the sacred Spear acted on Baldwin's men. By renewing and increasing the love of Jesus Crucified in his soul, it will make him more ready and alert in the observance of the rule and the actuation of its spirit of love; and he will have no difficulty in routing the enemy of his soul completely and forever.

The Spirit of Love

The spirit of love is sacrifice, negative and positive. Negatively it suggests the resignation of certain favorite objects or pursuits in favor of the beloved one; positively it spurs to the adoption of certain practices and habits in his behalf.

Beggar and Abbot

In the life of St. Serapius we read, that he was much devoted to the meditation on the Passion. One day he was reading a book on the Passion, as he was strolling on the road before the monastery, when a beggar approached him with a request for alms. Serapius answered that he had no

money, but in order to relieve him he gave the beggar his religious cloak, which he might exchange for money when he got to town. He resumed the reading of the Passion. Soon another beggar accosted him with the same request. He handed him his habit in the way of assistance, and read more on the Passion. A third beggar came. He gave him his tunic; and soon he was again absorbed in the Passion. Presently a monk of the monastery happened along and, seeing the abbot in the unwonted street attire, he was astounded and exclaimed in surprise: "Father Abbot, have you fallen among robbers? have they despoiled you thus?" Serapius pointed to a picture of Jesus Crucified and said: "He is the Robber Who divested me of everything."

The Habit Will Always Feel Soft

When St. Francis of a sudden gave up everything he had previously held dear unto the casting of his very garments at the feet of his irate father, and when he espoused a life of untold poverty and rigor, he was under the same influence as was St. Serapius. And even as the holy abbot, Francis stopped at nothing, much as the world sneered and his relatives and former companions objected. The identical influence was upon us when we cast our lot with that of Francis. May it never leave or decrease its power over us; then the seraphic rule will never grow irksome and the

Franciscan uniform will always feel soft, soothing, comforting and sweet.

Cleopatra

Of the notorious Cleopatra history relates, that she carried with her a poisonous reptile to use it for her own destruction whenever the occasion would call for it. She eventually employed it for this criminal purpose by having the venomous viper to inject its deadly poison into her bosom.

A Bouquet of Myrrh

It was the pious practice of St. Bernard, on the contrary, daily to gather for himself a bouquet of myrrh from the meditation on the Passion of Christ and to carry it carefully in his heart. This bouquet sustained him throughout the day in all temptations, difficulties and trials. Whenever he noticed he was weakening in virtue or piety, he recovered his ardor by means of his mystic bouquet. Happy the tertiary who plucks the same bouquet from a daily pious reflection on our Lord's suffering and death, preferably by going the Way of the Cross.

Friends Crave Resemblance

Another natural and favorite activity of true love is the desire for perfect resemblance between lovers. Good friends want to be alike as much as possible. In the beginning of their friendship

they affect an external resemblance in their dress and deportment, in their work and recreation. As their friendship grows they aim to achieve this mutual similarity in their views of life, in their likes and dislikes, in their attachments and aversions, in their dreams, ambitions and schemes. And phychologists tell us, that so great and close is the influence of the soul on the body that, as the mental and spiritual resemblance of two friends increases, there will gradually be noticeable a certain likeness between them even in their bodily appearance and personal looks. So mighty is the assimilating power of true love.

The Resemblance Was Perfect

It is consequently the best evidence and most conclusive sign of the genuineness and greatness of the love of Francis for Jesus Crucified that he ended by resembling Jesus as perfectly as any saint since the death of St. John, the beloved disciple, not only in the soul but also in the body, unto the very bearing of Christ's sacred wounds on his hands and feet and his side, so he could literally say with St. Paul: "Henceforth let no man be troublesome to me, for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body" (Gal., 6, 17). But as we shall devote a special meditation to this mysterious incident in the life of our holy father St. Francis, we shall not dwell at more length on it here.

Union with the Beloved One: the First and Last Desire

What sincere love covets most vehemently and cries for most insistently is union with the beloved one: not an ephemeral, sporadic, intermittent and passing union, but a permanent, lasting, final and perfect union. It is explainable, therefore, why St. Francis did not live but two short years on earth after his reception of the Stigmata. His love for Jesus had reached such an uncontrollable stage, that it postulated the closest and an everlasting union with Him, to the detriment of Francis' bodily health and the gradual extinction of his mortal life. His death was due to the love expressed by St. Paul in the passionate desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phillip., 1, 23). His agony was a forceful and at the same time a poetic expression and exhibition of his seraphic love for Jesus: a telling illustration of the adage, "As we live so we die." St. Francis had lived for the love, and died of the love of the Crucified One.

The Death of a Saint

When he felt his death approaching, he requested the friars to transport him to the Church of the Portiuncula. "There I began to live for God," he said, "and there I want to die for Him." Having arrived there he bade the brethren to disrobe him and lay him on the bare earth, so

that he might die divested of everything, in the embraces of holy poverty, in imitation of his divine Pattern. He wanted the resemblance between Jesus and himself to be as perfect as possible now that their eternal union was so close at hand.

Death Tarries

Death came too slowly for the saint. He remonstrated with it for its tardiness and begged it to hurry. His whole posture and expression seemed to be a living embodiment of the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 41, 2, 3): "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" He desired to be with Jesus, and the closer his desire was of fulfilment the more ardent and impatient it waxed. Even as the bird that is entrapped in a cage beats fretfully against the walls of it in order to get back into the free air; and as the fish caught and drawn on the shore tosses fitfully to and fro to regain its element, the water; and as the homesick child has neither rest nor joy until it can fling itself again into the arms of its mother and nestle lovingly on her heart: so the soul of Francis felt imprisoned and fettered, out of its element and sphere, pining with homesickness and a desire to

be with God, its life, its being and its One consuming love.

"Stay With Us"

Eager as Francis was to bid farewell to this earth, so reluctant were the brethren to see him depart. In the few brief years they had been privileged to spend in his company they had learned to love and venerate him for his goodness and holiness; but now that he was about to leave them forever in this life, he looked grander and nobler and more lovable than ever. They felt they could not get on without him, and he therefore had to abide with them. As Eliseus clung and cried out to Elias, their hearts clung and cried out unto Francis saying: "I will not leave thee! . . . My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the driver thereof!" (4 Kings, 2, 2, 12.) And with the disciples of Emmaus they pleaded: "Stay with us!" (Luke 24, 29.)

Francis Lures Death

To induce death to hurry, Francis spoke the beautiful poem or song which he addressed to his sister Death. He then recited the touching psalm: "Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi": "I cried to the Lord with my voice" (Ps. 141, 2). The brethren answered him as well as they could in their great distress and sadness at his parting.

He continued with a loud, though broken voice, unto the end of the psalm, when he said: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name: the just wait for me, until Thou reward me" (Psalm 141, 8). Saying this he expired peacefully in the Lord. The human seraph was caught up by the divine Seraph, who had appeared to him on La Verna, to be held in His heavenly embraces forevermore.

As We Live, We Die

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!" (Apoc., 14, 13.) If to follow St. Francis on the Seraphic Highway had no other reward on this earth than so sweet and happy a death, it alone would be reason enough to embrace his rule of life eagerly and observe it cheerfully to the end. If we want to die as St. Francis, our holy father, died, from the effects of the love of Jesus and the desire to be with Him, we must duplicate in our lives the seraphic love of Francis for Christ Crucified, and proclaim not only in words, but also exhibit in our daily conduct the Franciscan motto: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" (Philipp., 1, 21.) Amen.

LECTURE X.

Franciscans and the Holy Eucharist

"He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him" (John, 6, 57).

THE spirit of the Seraphic Order has always been and is today strongly impregnated with a vivid faith in, and a warm devotion for Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist. Our Lord, as St. Paul assures us, instituted the Most Holy Sacrament as a memory of His Passion. The tertiary, then, having for his ideal and the end of his ambition Jesus Crucified, instinctively loves and adheres to the divine memory of the Passion. In the Franciscan Order he finds grand and numerous patterns after which he can shape his personal devotion and behavior towards his Eucharistic Lord.

St. Francis in the Lead

Above all he has the example of St. Francis. In his testament to the friars our holy father feelingly says: "And the Lord gave me such faith in the churches, that with all simplicity I adored and said: We adore Thee, Most Holy Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all Thy churches which are in the whole world, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou has redeemed the

world!" No one can count how often since then this prayer has been lovingly said in honor of the Sacramental Jesus, and no one can measure how much it has helped in the last seven centuries, to maintain, spread, deepen and intensify the belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Hallowed Be Thy Name!

In the same testament the saint relates that, wherever he found the written sacred names of Jesus or of God in unseemly places, he reverently gathered them up to deposit them in a becoming place and manner. If he had such respect for the written word of God, we have an indication of his awe for the living God Himself in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

"Lord I Am Not Worthy"

Actions speak louder than words. Perhaps St. Francis never expressed his lively faith in, and his ardent love for his Eucharistic Master more than when from a feeling of his utter unworthiness he positively and finally declined to become a priest, and this in the face of the most urgent invitations and pleadings on the part of bishops and cardinals. He was so imbued with the reality and sublimity of the sacerdotal dignity, that in view of his personal ineptness, as he saw it, he could not rise beyond the feeling expressed by St. Peter in the words: "Depart from me, for I am a

sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke, 5, 8,) and that of the Centurion who said: "Lord, I am not worthy!" (Matt., 8, 8.)

His Humility Was Genuine

The sincerity of this attitude St. Francis demonstrated by his reverent conduct towards the priests of God. He describes it when he declares that, if at the same time he would meet an archangel of heaven and the most lowly priest on earth, he would first salute the priest, and then the archangel, since the priest, by providing him with the most sacred Body and Blood of Christ, did and meant much more to him than any archangel, whatever his office or dignity.

A Dumb Animal Becomes an Eloquent Advocate

The greatest son of St. Francis, the glorious St. Anthony of Padua, made a most valuable contribution to the seraphic propaganda of the Holy Eucharist by his famous miracle at Rimini. Whilst he was preaching fervently and convincingly on the Real Presence a number of heretics and unbelievers persevered in their denial of the doctrine, and met the apostolic missionary's preaching with comtemptuous sneers. To confound and put to shame their pride and vain conceit, the saint exposed the Most Holy Sacrament to the adoration of the faithful. At the

same time he had a horse brought forward. The dumb animal no sooner arrived before the sacred host when it most reverently and devoutly fell on its knees in awe and adoration of its God in the Holy Eucharist. Everyone present was overcome by this mute but eloquent exhibition of worship, and even the hardened cynics and scoffers relented, and bowed in faith and homage to their hidden Lord.

His Is a Lasting Prayer

The Seraphic Doctor, the learned and modest St. Bonaventure, prayed so fondly, lovingly and touchingly to Jesus after Holy Communion that to this day his prayer serves and is endorsed by the Church as a model for the thanksgiving after Holy Mass to all the priests of the world. There is none sweeter, more soothing and more satisfying. It is posted, together with other pertinent prayers, on large placards before a prie-dieu in the sacristy of practically every Catholic church and chapel, and is also found in many prayerbooks for the laity. It begins with the words: "Pierce, O sweetest Lord Jesus, the marrow and bowels of my soul with the most delicious and wholesome wound of Thy love!"

An Angel Gave Him Holy Communion

His vivid faith and tender reverence for his Eucharistic Friend, St. Bonaventure exhibited one

morning by yielding to a crushing feeling of his personal unworthiness, and by abstaining, much against his instinct of love and desire, from Holy Communion. In recognition of his reverential attitude and deep humility, an angel brought him the Holy Sacrament as an indication, that the consciousness of his lowliness should never again preponderate over his desire to be united with Jesus in the angelic banquet.

The Lord Is Their Shield

The first daughter of St. Francis, the dear and sweet St. Clare, is known in history for the remarkable manner in which her faith in the Real Presence saved her and her daughters from a most serious plight.

One of the most inspiring sanctuaries in Assisi is the convent of St. Damian, given to St. Clare in the thirteenth century. What makes it so impressive and attractive is the fact that it is the best preserved of all Franciscan monuments. It is still in the condition of its original construction. The table in the refectory is the one used by St. Clare and her nuns. It now serves the Franciscan friars who are the present inhabitants of the cloister. In the building there is a little window with which there is connected a touching story. The Turks in their marauding expeditions had penetrated far into Italy and were rendering the

Umbrian valley unsafe. A horde of them swept towards Assisi and were mounting the hill on which the convent of St. Damian is built. The nuns saw them coming apace in their brutality, making straight for the nunnery. The pious virgins were in great distress.

In their plight they instinctively ran into the chapel, their only refuge. They prostrated themselves before the tabernacle and cried from the depths of their hearts: "In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in aeternum!" "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded in eternity!" Jesus answered from the tabernacle, assuring His spouses, He would be their shield and protector. He bade Clare, the holy abbess, to take the ciborium with the sacred hosts from the tabernacle , and use it to put the assailants to flight. She reverently extracted the Holy Eucharist from the tabernacle, and in procession carried it to the aperture overlooking the eminence which the Saracens were scaling. As soon as she exhibited it before them, they fell powerless to the ground. The convent and its virgins were saved. The nuns returned to the chapel with feelings of deepest gratitude. St. Clare reposited the Holy Sacrament, and in chorus they sang the Te Deum. With special sweetness they lingered on the last verse of it: "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in aeternum!"

The Great Crusader

Next in order is St. Louis IX, the king of France, the grand patron of the Third Order. His faith in the Real Presence was unusual even in a saint.

A messenger, breathless with haste, approached the king one day, and said feverishly: "Your Majesty, hasten to the church! A stupendous miracle is going on there. A priest is saying Holy Mass, and after the consecration instead of the host there is visible on the altar Jesus Himself in His human figure. Everybody is marvelling at it. Hurry, before it disappears!" To the great astonishment of the messenger the king remained quiet and composed. "Let them go to see that miracle," he said, "who have any doubt regarding the actual presence of our Lord in the Holy Sacrament. As for me, even if I saw Jesus on the altar in His visible form, and touched Him with my hand, and heard His voice, I should not be more convinced than I now am, that He is present in the consecrated host. My faith is sufficient for me. I need no miracle." Such must be our faith in the Real Presence; so vivid and strong, that it pierces the very veils of bread and wine, and we imagine we see our Lord before us face to face. Our conduct towards Him will then never lack either becoming respect or loving familiarity.

The Sultan's Odd Request

In one of his Crusades against the Turks St. Louis of France was taken captive. The Christians at once negotiated for his release. The enemy was willing to deliver him against heavy concessions. The Christians yielded to his terms. The treaty was drawn up. The Christian leaders put their signatures to it. Just as the Sultan took the pen to sign it, he paused and said: "I want another guarantee of your fidelity." They wondered what he still wanted. He continued: "I want one of those small wafers which the king consumes in the morning." He wanted a consecrated host.

The Sultan had allowed the king a chapel in his captivity, in which the saintly prisoner heard Holy Mass and received Holy Communion. The Turk had observed Louis at these sacred functions and noticed, that they absorbed the king's heart and mind to such a degree, that for the time being he was oblivious of the world and everything about him. Hence the Sultan judged he would have the king in his power by means of the consecrated wafer even after his departure from captivity. Of course his request could not be granted. Does your attitude at Holy Mass, at Holy Communion and at Benediction impress the spectators in the same favorable manner? Are they convinced by your very demeanor that

Jesus is in reality your God, the one absorbing and controlling love of your life?

Her Director Was Strict

The charming patroness of the Third Order, the lovable St. Elizabeth of Hungary, displayed her love for her Eucharistic Spouse more in an indirect than in a direct manner. In her day the reception of Holy Communion on the part of the laity, even the pious laity, was quite infrequent. Rigorous principles as to the required disposition on the part of the recipient prevailed in many quarters. In consequence Elizabeth was allowed to receive but seldom. To observe the long intervals between her Holy Communions was the greatest ordeal for this woman of God, aflame as she was with an almost uncontrollable eagerness to possess Jesus, her divine Spouse, as really and intimately as possible, the oftener the better. But by her humble and obedient submission and resignation, and by communicating spiritually when she could not do it actually, she pleased her eucharistic Lover as much as she might have pleased Him by daily actual reception. Herein she is a consoling and encouraging example to the many pious tertiaries of both sexes who are somehow hindered from receiving daily and who indemnify themselves by holy resignation and spiritual communion.

A High Distinction

The Church has eminently rewarded the part taken by the three orders of St. Francis in behalf of the worship of Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament by proclaiming the humble son of the Little Poor Man of Assisi, the laybrother St. Paschal Baylon, as the patron of all eucharistic leagues, of priests as well as of seculars, of the present time as well as of the future, unto the very end of the world. Of this distinction we Franciscans are naturally as proud as we are glad, for we feel it was well deserved. How much St. Pascal really loved Jesus in the Holy Eucharist became strikingly apparent only after his death, through the startling incident handed down to us on good authority.

An Inspiring Scene

When St. Pascal died, everyone knew a great saint had passed away. His funeral was largely attended. As the funeral Mass was being celebrated, at the consecration of the bread the body of the saint was seen to rise; the eyes opened and lovingly greeted Jesus in the elevated host. When the priest deposited the host on the altar, the eyes closed and the body reclined. The same phenomenon was witnessed at the elevation of the chalice with the Precious Blood of Jesus. The eyes of the saint again saluted it most adoringly. Everyone present was astounded.

But was it really so surprising, that the eyes of that man, which in life had had but one object of love, one magnet which attracted them, and one light which pleased them should, have maintained their lifelong practice even in death?

A Eucharistic Marathon: Twelve Years and No Stop

The tertiary, then, who is true to the traditions of his order, evinces a strong and active devotion towards the Holy Eucharist in every way and direction. He visits Jesus, attends Holy Mass and communicates often and worthily, every day, if possible. And much is possible when we have the sincere desire to do it. Chicago, Illinois, for instance, is considered by many people to be a wicked city and not by any means a hothouse of piety. Those who have a chance to observe the spirit of the great city at close range and under its surface know, of course, that among its many sinners it hides crowds of great saints. Anyway, a Catholic maiden lady of middle age, a fervent tertiary, working in one of the largest department stores of the city, told me some time ago, that for the last twelve years she has not missed daily Communion *once*. She gets much more real and solid delight out of this practice, than other people get out of their custom of frequenting the theatres or dance halls every night. She has the spirit of St. Francis. Her marathon race in life

is to establish a record in the daily reception of Holy Communion, not for the gratification of her vanity or the satisfaction of a mere whim or fancy or fad, but for the increase of her love for Jesus and her reward in heaven. Oh, would that this ambition were but more general, even among tertiaries!

He Loves the Beauty of God's House

A tertiary endowed with the eucharistic trait loves to work and contribute, according to his capacity, towards building and maintaining in their becoming beauty and dignity tabernacles or churches for his sacramental Lord. He gladly renounces not only the superfluities but even some of the reasonable comforts and pleasures of life in order to use the money thus saved in the interest of the dwelling of his eucharistic King, first in his own parish, then elsewhere, far and near.

Love Is Active, If It Is Love

The same spirit actuates him to foster, develop and support vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, the members of which devote themselves directly or indirectly to the cult of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament. He will, moreover, after the example of St. Francis cultivate and show great and unfailing reverence in thought, word and conduct, for and towards every priest

and Religious consecrated to God. Inspired by the behavior of this same holy founder the tertiary will entertain and nurse the sweetest respect for the adorable Names of Jesus and of God, and the men tertiaries, not satisfied with loving and honoring the Holy Name themselves, but eager to spread the love and respect for it as much as possible, will either be or become faithful and zealous members of the excellent and very commendable Holy Name Society, which is a source of well grounded pride to the Church in the United States, and a factor of untold good.

Jesus and Mary Will Not Be Parted

Whoever is in love with Jesus can not be indifferent or cold to Mary. This would be a psychological anomaly. It is therefore but natural that St. Francis, whose love for Jesus stands unsurpassed, harbored for the Mother of Jesus a love as strong as it was tender.

Under Mary's Care from the Start

Not without significance and positive premeditation on his part, St. Francis laid the foundation to his first order, the Order of Friars, in a church dedicated to the Blessed Mother: St. Mary of the Angels. In the same church, through Mary's irresistible pleading, he was granted the most generous Portiuncula Indulgence which, in its manner and measure of spiritual

wealth, was unprecedented and unheard of before the time of Francis.

The Order Has Been Grateful

Mary's great favors in behalf of Francis and his flock were not unrequited. The Franciscans have returned love for love and devotion for devotion to their heavenly Queen. The second part of the Hail Mary, beginning: "Holy Mary, Mother of God," was started and spread throughout the world by the sons of St. Francis. The same is true regarding the pious and most salutary practice of reciting the Angelus three times daily. No one can compute what joy these two customs have already afforded and still afford Mary's heart, and how much they have enlisted and still enlist her powerful sympathy and intercession on behalf of all sons and daughters of St. Francis. The rosary of the Seven Joys of Mary, recited daily by innumerable tertiaries for centuries, adds another feature to the consideration just mentioned.

The Seraphic Order's Outstanding Merit

But perhaps the Seraphic Family deserved best of Mary and, to use a common expression, got a substantial first mortgage on her good will for all times to come, by championing with heroic fervor and loving persistency the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception, the brightest and most precious gem in her celestial crown: the

members of the First Order by learned and enthusiastic treatises and discussions, under the gallant leadership of Mary's valiant knight, John Duns Scotus; and members of the two other orders by assisting the friars unto victory by their prayers and supplications. It was therefore but just and meet, that the whole seraphic family with all its parts has placed itself in an especial manner under the sweet and secure patronage of Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God.

Diagnose Your Spirit

If you want to make sure whether you have the true spirit of the Franciscan order observe your manner towards Mary. Do you say the rosary of the Seven Joys, or at least a part of it, daily? Do you recite the Angelus regularly? Do you lay a particular stress on the last part of the Hail Mary in asking for a happy death? Does your program of piety call for some special homage to be paid to Mary on every one of her feasts, on every Saturday, and every day in the months of May and October? Do you honor your Immaculate Mistress by endeavoring to lead an immaculate life yourself? If so, rest assured, for Mary will take care of you here and hereafter.

The Ladders

A holy friar, in spite of his severe and mortified life, was much worried about his salvation. His

fear had become a veritable obsession. It brought on nervousness and insomnia. One day in prayer the friar pleaded with God to put his mind at rest on the subject by giving him a degree of assurance. He had a vision. He saw two ladders reaching from earth to heaven. One was the ladder of God's unbending and inexorable justice. At the top of it stood God Himself, the all-holy and just Judge. A number of friars attempted to mount this ladder. Some got up several rungs; a few got towards the middle, a considerable height; but sooner or later all dropped from sheer fear and fright. Not one got to heaven on that ladder.

The other was the ladder of God's boundless mercy. At the head of it stood Mary, the Refuge of sinners, with out-stretched hands, an inviting countenance and an encouraging smile of love. The friars scaled this ladder with ease and joy. When they approached the top, Mary reached down and helped them into heaven. Not one who tried this ladder failed. Such was the vision. What it contains of comfort is vouched for by our holy Mother, the Church, and was intended by the words of our dying Savior: "Woman, behold thy Son!" Our Lord charged her then to see to it, that His Blood should not be shed for us in vain.

Inseparable!

On earth Jesus and Mary were always together: in Nazareth, Bethlehem, Egypt, on our Lord's

missionary tours, in Jerusalem, on Calvary; and now they are together in heaven. So they belong together in our hearts, on our lips, in our devotion and piety, in life, in death, and in a blessed eternity.

Another Mother

Besides Mary, the tertiary has another heavenly-born spiritual mother: the Catholic Church. The livelier his faith in, and the stronger his love for Jesus in the Eucharist, the stauncher will be his allegiance and attachment to his Mother, the one, holy, Roman Catholic Church.

In the Franciscan Martyrs of Gorkum, a town in the Netherlands, the tertiary has an inspiring model. They were imprisoned by the heretics and bidden to abjure their faith in the Most Blessed Sacrament and the supremacy of the pope. They indignantly repudiated the very suggestion, and gladly suffered the bitterest ignominy, the most inhuman tortures and a slow, painful death rather than forswear their belief in the Eucharistic King and in His visible vicar on earth, the bishop of Rome.

"No one can have God for his father," says St. Ambrose, "who has not the Church for his mother." At death every tertiary likes to repeat the words of the seraphic St. Teresa: "I am dying as a child of the Catholic Church." Amen.

LECTURE XI.

The Holy Habit

FOR THE CEREMONY OF RECEPTION

"Put on the new man who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph., 4, 24).

ONE of the saddest and most heart-rending complaints God ever made against His chosen people was when He bitterly said: "All the day long I have spread My hands to a people that believeth not, and contradicteth Me" (Romans, 10, 21). His love was spurned, His mercy ignored, His goodness insulted. This cut Him in the heart, and He deplored it poignantly.

God Calls: You Respond

Today, at this sacred ceremony, when a number of candidates are going to beg for and receive the habit of the Third Order of Penance, that they may love God more by closer resemblance to Jesus Christ Crucified, and "may more easily obtain eternal salvation", the reverse is true in a very positive degree. God called you, dear postulants, to this life of humility, simplicity, unworldliness and self-denial, and you have responded cheerfully, gratefully and longingly. He stretched out His hands towards you, and you have grasped them cordially, lovingly and tena-

ciously. Hence our Lord's pleasure and delight are as great and intense in this instance as His disappointment and regret were keen and bitter in the case of the hardened and ungrateful Jews.

Your Fortune Is Great: Congratulations!

But if God's pleasure at the ceremony we shall now witness is high, your good fortune for being called by God to lead the life of a Religious in the world, after the manner of St. Francis of Assisi, is no less. Hence we congratulate you from our hearts and wish you every blessing and happiness in the new life you are entering upon. In the name of the order I welcome you warmly to our dear seraphic fold and assure you, that we are happy to have you for our spiritual brothers and sisters, to help us keep alive, and to spread more and more among men, and to transmit to the generations that will follow us the Christlike spirit of our holy father, St. Francis, whose one aim in life was to make the whole world safe and eager for Jesus Christ Crucified. When the habit of his order, the scapular and cord, is bestowed upon you, St. Francis will say to you, as it were, in the words of the Bible (2 Cor., 6, 18): "I will receive you; and I will be a father to you; and you shall be my sons and daughters!" What a priceless distinction! What an inestimable privilege!

St. Francis' Uniform

It may serve to enhance and intensify your appreciation of, and gratitude for the great grace which is yours in being clothed with the livery of St. Francis of Assisi, if we concentrate our reflections on the distinguished privilege there is in the mere wearing of the habit of so holy a man of God.

The Power and Wisdom of God

In the eyes of the world this habit, the scapular and cord, means nothing. If anything, it is, in its view, the height of folly and the badge of stupidity. In other words, even as Christ Crucified, of whose love it is a speaking symbol to the true tertiary, the habit is "unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness: but unto them that are called . . . Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor., 1, 23, 24).

Drenched With Holy Blood

Mean and insignificant, then, though it appears to be, the garb which will now be delivered unto you, is a grand and glorious uniform. Its historical associations are of the most animating and inspiring nature. This humble uniform was worn by our dear St. Francis when he was rapt in ecstacy on Mt. La Verna, and saw in a vision his

crucified Lord, and received from Him the impression of His sacred wounds; and consequently it was drenched again and again with the holy blood that oozed from those wondrous wounds. Indeed, it is a consecrated uniform.

St. Anthony Wore It

This poor habit was worn, too, by the amiable St. Anthony of Padua, as our Blessed Mother appeared to him to deposit her sweet Infant in his loving arms. It was the attire of St. Bonaventure as he wrote of the love of Jesus with the pen of a seraph—which merited for him the title of the Seraphic Doctor—while again and again during the writing he was carried away and lost in heavenly contemplation. It was also worn by the gentle St. Clare as, armed with the inexpugnable shield of consecrated virgins, the Holy Eucharist, she confounded and routed the infidel and barbarous horde that threatened the safety of her nunnery and the honor of its inmates. In truth it is a memorable and blessed uniform.

The Noble Guardians of the Holy Land

This robe of self-hatred and of loyalty to Jesus Crucified, which you are now to receive, has been very fittingly worn for the last seven hundred years by the noble and heroic custodians of the sacred places in which our Savior was born, lived,

labored, taught, suffered and died, who in defense of these consecrated spots, when the occasion called for it, joyfully shed their blood and gave up their very life for Jesus. Verily it is a glorious and inspiring robe.

She Preferred the Habit to Her Queenly Robes

No wonder the great tertiaries of all ages cherished their habit with a love and reverence not understandable to those to whom the meaning of the seraphic uniform has never been revealed. St. Elizabeth of Portugal used to say, that she prized her tertiary garb higher than her queenly robes. "What do these queenly garments of the finest and most costly materials mean to me after all?" she exclaimed. "They often cover and vainly try to hide a great deal of bitter chagrin and heartache, to which people of royal station are particularly subject, and expose one to many and insidious temptations of vanity, pride, worldliness and voluptuousness and, consequently, of losing eternal happiness. Whereas the garb of penance surrounds the soul with an armor of heavenly grace and protection, it keeps it in placid sobriety, equanimity and self-control, and gradually and increasingly prepares it for the reception of everlasting bliss. Why, then, should I not give it a most decided and enthusiastic preference before the gaudy apparel of the vain and shallow world?"

The Humble and Grateful Cardinal

Similar sentiments of supernatural appraisal of the Franciscan habit were expressed many years ago by a cardinal of the Church, who in Rome was publicly received in the Third Order in the Church of St. Isidore, which is in charge of the Irish friars. After the ceremony, the Father Guardian of the monastery, not a little elated over the grand acquisition to the order, in a short but animated speech congratulated the Third Order on having won so distinguished a subject. The humble cardinal did not like that remark. In his response he said with all sincerity: "Do not congratulate the order, but congratulate me; for I want you to know that the humble garb of St. Francis throws much more luster on my purple than the purple throws upon it."

The Postulant's Spirit

He had the spirit that befits a child of St. Francis, and which should possess every postulant for the habit. He should be convinced, that he is not doing the order a favor by joining it, but that all the favor is his and, as a result, his too the debt of gratitude and the burden of responsibility; that the order can easier get on without him, than he without it; that his remaining out of it would be a small loss to the order, but it might imply the forfeiture of a large and incalculable spiritual gain for himself. Whoever enters

the order with this disposition of self-destructive humility—in the good sense of the word—will not be long in reaching his goal after the manner of Francis, and in exclaiming with St. Paul: "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me!" (Gal., 2, 20.)

The Spirit Is Not Dead

Nor is this sentiment of humble and enthusiastic appreciation of the habit of St. Francis confined to ages long past and generations dead and spent. A few years ago when the Franciscan Bishop Gennaro, who had labored long and much in China, was on his death bed, he said to the brethren who were kneeling about: "If I had to resign either my episcopal dignity or the habit of my order, I should not hesitate a moment in resigning the former."

He had reasons to speak thus. While the office of a bishop, as St. Paul observes, is good and desirable in itself, it is not quite so likely, as is the lowly garb of St. Francis, to nurse in its subject the spirit of self-abhorrence and self-condemnation, which are such powerful factors leading straight up to Calvary and to a close union with the divine Protagonist of its bloody, death-destroying and life-giving immortal drama.

They Did Not Meet on Earth

On earth St. Francis had never met the great St. Elizabeth, princess of Thuringia, and the first one in Germany to be clothed with the garb of penance. He had heard, however, of her great strides in holiness and her heroic attachment to the Crucified One in the most trying disasters and crushing afflictions.

He Bequeathed Her His Mantle

In loving admiration and fatherly approbation of her close adherence to the rule and the prestige she gave his habit by her great sanctity, St. Francis, before he died, requested his brethren to deliver unto his godly daughter Elizabeth, after his death, his own mantle. The friars faithfully complied with their father's dying wish.

A Great Joy

Imagine, then, the joy of this saintly woman, when she was handed the very mantle of the man of God, who was the closest living duplicate of Christ Crucified since the day of the apostles: the mantle that had again and again been moistened with the holy blood of the sacred wounds made in Francis' body by Jesus Christ Himself. For nothing in the world would she have exchanged or surrendered this priceless treasure. It was immensely dearer and more

precious in her sight than any rare pearl or costly stone or brilliant crown she had ever had.

A Legacy to You from St. Francis

If not so directly and personally, yet not less really, the habit you are about to receive, my dear candidates, has come down to you from St. Francis himself, sanctified by his wearing, and enriched with the blessing of his godlike life; hence your duty of embracing it as reverently and wearing it as fondly as St. Elizabeth welcomed and carried the hallowed mantle of St. Francis.

He Wrought Miracles With It

As a token of his fatherly love and interest the prophet Elias, at his departure from this earth in a fiery chariot, bequeathed his mantle to his disciple Eliseus who, by means of this relic of his saintly teacher, wrought conspicuous and very helpful miracles.

You Can Work Miracles, Too

The uniform you are about to be clothed with is just such a legacy to you from the seraphic Elias, St. Francis. By virtue of this sacred bequest many of his sons and daughters have wrought the most signal moral miracles in their own and others' interest. There is no reason why you should not be able to do the same. Provided you carry this holy habit with faith, loyalty and

love, you will soon discover its miraculous power in the wondrous ease it gives you in the practice of piety and virtue, in flying a certain occasion of sin, and removing from your life an object or person or pursuit that was threatening your innocence and menacing your salvation.

What Are Your Sentiments?

You have every ground, then, to welcome this seemingly humble garb of penance with hearty eagerness, to accept it with the warmest gratitude, and to treasure it with the fondest love. These sentiments for the habit must not be merely theoretical and idle, but thoroughly practical and operative. If so, they will disclose themselves in four ways.

Do Not Disgrace the Habit

First, you will take care never to disgrace or tarnish the uniform of St. Francis by an unworthy or shameful conduct. You will cherish the glory endowed with which it has come down to you, by contributing your share to its increase by a regular and consistent Francis-like behavior.

Do Not Disrupt the Habit

Secondly, you will be on your guard not to disrupt this hallowed garment by sowing or nurturing discord or friction in the order or fraternity. Even good and saintly people are

frequently of very different and dissonant minds anent the conduct of the affairs of God and His Church. But true virtue will protect them against selfish stubbornness, and prompt them to an humble and reasonable acquiescence in, and compliance with the suggestions and plans of others. After all, usually the best and most effective method of precedure is the one in which all parties concur. Unity is so strong a factor of success that even the theoretically better ideas or proposals often rather gain than lose by being sacrificed to it.

All Saints' Church

They tell the story of the Irish taxi driver in New York at the occasion of a large Catholic convention. At the depot five passengers accosted him at the same time. One, an Irishman, desired to go to St. Patrick's Church; the second, a German, wanted to go to St. Boniface Church; the third, a Polish gentleman, was headed for St. Casimir's Church; the fourth, a Frenchman, aimed to go to the Church of St. Joan of Arc; the fifth, an Italian, was in a hurry to get to St. Anthony's Church.

He Was Ready

Not at all non-plussed at the number of "fares" and their divergent destinations, the chauffeur invited them all in his cab, promising he would

take care of them with dispatch. When they were seated, he hurried off, and ere long he stopped at a church to let all his men off at one time, saying: "Gentlemen, here you are!" As in a chorus all five asked, if it was the church of the particular saint they had designated. "This is All Saints' Church," the driver exclaimed, "and if you do not find your favorite saint here, you will find him nowhere."

There's Room for All

The Third Order, as its history amply proves, has ample room for all descriptions and degrees of saints, known or unknown, open or concealed. Hence there is no justification for any unpleasant or uncharitable arguing in its ranks regarding the objects and the ways of activity, the persons or manner of the administration, and so on. On the other hand a lively interest in the order leading to an animated discussion of its real interests and purposes, so it remains within the bounds of charity and moderation, can only foster its growth and augment its usefulness. To an organization there is only one thing so harmful and suicidal as is internal dissension and schism, and that is gradual and complete stagnation.

Do Not Insult the Habit

In the third place, therefore, to apply the general principle just expressed to the life of the

individual, the tertiary will be careful not to insult the holy habit by simply neglecting to wear it. To do this for any length of time without sufficient reason is a very strong and cutting way of saying, that the habit stands for little or nothing in his eyes, and that he is just as well off without it. This is also a most expeditious manner of forfeiting the spirit of the order and losing the seraphic vocation completely.

Hence, dear candidates, if there is one resolution you are making today in recognition of the grace that is yours in becoming the spiritual children of St. Francis, let it be this, that after you now begin to wear the Franciscan habit, you will never culpably be without it until the moment of your death.

Advertise the Habit

Finally, it is the tendency of the gifts of God to yearn for publicity, for the greater glory of God and the larger welfare of souls. It will therefore be your duty, once you are a member of the Order of Penance, to advertise it and its uniform as widely and as potently as possible; not so much by word of mouth – for loud and indiscreet laudation of the order, especially when it is unsupported by the individual's conduct, rather harms than profits the order—as by a demeanor inspired by the rule of the order, and maintaining the high traditional level of the loyal

followers of St. Francis. This will be a light inviting many other salvation-hungry souls to the order's fold, and illuminating many more as to the order's proper nature and work.

On your part, it will be the best method of paying your debt of gratitude to God for your sublime vocation. The mere wearing of the habit means nothing and is worse than an empty farce, if it is not accompanied by a change of heart, a renewal of spirit and an improvement in conduct.

What a Strange People

During the first national convention of the Third Order in Chicago in 1921, in the large hotel in which the order had its headquarters, and where very many of the members were staying, the officials and numerous employees as well as the other guests of the hotel were astonished and most favorably impressed by the attitude and carriage of the tertiaries. "What a strange people!" they said; "how different from the ordinary participants in conventions! how quiet and orderly! how serene, peaceful, temperate and composed! what a strange people!" This was the kind of advertising the order likes and wants; by it it has prospered in the past, and hopes to thrive always in the future.

"To Him That Overcometh I Will Give . . . a New Name"

To remind you continually of this duty to advertise the order you are given a new name at your very entrance in the order. You are to start a new life, turn a new leaf, and "put on the new man who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth." Even as Peter and Paul, after Jesus had given them new names, converted all the ardor and impetuosity of their spirit into the love and service of their Master, so you are to devote yourselves henceforth with renewed fervor and fresh consecration to His pleasure after the manner of the Little Poor Man of Assisi.

A Passport to Heaven

A cardinal who stood high in the favor of Leo XIII, the great tertiary pope, was told one day, that the pope wanted to see him on special business. Curious to know what it was, he hastened to the Vatican. When he was admitted to the pope's presence, he was surprised to hear the pontiff ask him: "Does Your Eminence desire a passport to heaven?" The cardinal replied: "Your Holiness, that is the one place to which I want to go." "Then I want you to be the Protector of the Order of St. Francis," the pope rejoined. The cardinal felt honored by, and was much elated over his appointment, feeling the

prayers of the order would operate mightily towards his salvation.

Before offering you the habit of St. Francis I, too, could say to you: Do you want a passport to heaven? And in view of your categorical reply in the affirmative I could also say: Here it is in the shape of the garb of St. Francis. It has opened the gates of heaven to countless multitudes: if you do not lose or forfeit it by disloyalty or neglect, it will not only introduce you into heaven, but will also show you to a distinguished place in it.

The Seraphic Mary Magdalen

St. Margaret of Cortona, who lived in the thirteenth century, is called the Mary Magdalen of the Franciscan Order. She was a girl of great and fascinating beauty but, as is frequently the case, her beauty, far from being a blessing, proved a curse. A wicked man, altogether unworthy of a good woman's love, was infatuated by her and led her into vile sin. For nine years the two maintained illicit relations to the great scandal of the entire community.

One day, at the appointed hour in the afternoon, Margaret was at their usual trysting-place in a grove near the town, impatiently waiting for her lover. It was the first time he had failed to be the first one on the spot. Margaret could not

account for his non-appearance. She grew worried, and her young heart throbbed almost audibly with a variety of overpowering emotions.

Margaret and the Dog

Presently the little dog—Margaret is always pictured with this little dog—the companion of her lover, ran towards her, whining in an uncanny fashion, and indicating that he wanted her to follow him. He led her deeper into the grove where, of a sudden, she saw the body of her paramour stretched out on the ground, covered with blood, cold and dead. He had been ruthlessly stabbed to death by a jealous rival.

At this gruesome and blood-curdling sight Margaret for the moment was petrified with fright and horror. Coming to, she suffered a complete revulsion of body and soul, and shrieked in terror: "If this is the end of sin, I am through with it!"

She was. Her weird experience had given her an irresistible disgust for the sinful lecherous indulgences she had previously delighted in. The very memory of them now revolted her. With the same eagerness and passion with which she had pursued them, she now embraced the life of penance and atonement. She was determined not to rest until she had completely obliterated every vestige of her vicious career and made amends for it to God.

Give Me Penance or Give Me Death!

She chanced to hear of the Order of Penance. The very title at once appealed to her. "Penance!" she exclaimed, "that is just what I need. It is the one cry of my soul, its deepest and strongest urge. Give me penance or give me death!" She hastened to the Father Superior of the Franciscan monastery to ask for admission in the order of penitents.

The good Father had heard the evil reports of her distressing conduct, and demurred at her request saying, that the order did not receive people of her type. Margaret insisted humbly but emphatically saying: "Father, you do not know me. I am no longer Margaret, the sinner, but I am Margaret, the penitent. Give me a chance, Father, and I promise you that I shall not dishonor the Order of St. Francis."

After assuring himself of the truth of her assertion, the friar clothed her with the garb of penance. She kept her word and, far from disgracing the habit, she soon covered it with honor by her most extraordinary and heroic penance. Whatever disedification she had given by her former libertinism she more than atoned for by the edification of her penance and godliness. Indeed, her zeal was such that her confessor soon had to counsel her to keep her mortifications within the bounds of Christian moderation and prudence.

Jesus' Goodness Is Unequalled

Her reward was not long in coming. Especially by onetime sinners Jesus does not allow His generosity to be outrun. He follows up their loving and unusual efforts to propitiate and please Him by favors more unusual and more loving. In the case of Margaret they gradually assumed the form of heavenly visions, ecstacies and raptures, one sweeter and more heavenly than the other.

In one of these visions our Lord transported her into heaven. She was ravished by what she saw: the great white throne of God, the thrones of Jesus and His Mother, and of the angels and saints. Among the latter she noticed one that was particularly resplendent and glorious. She asked Jesus whose throne it was.

Our Savior replied: "That is the throne of My son Francis. Because he followed Me so closely in humility and poverty, he now shines with such splendor and magnificence." She observed that there was still much empty space before and about the throne of Francis, and asked the reason for it. "That space," our Lord continued, "is reserved for all the true sons and daughters of Francis. No one else may occupy it."

Let Us Hold On to Our Reservation

Let us hope, my dear friends, that all of us who are or will be children of St. Francis, will have a

reserved seat about our holy father's throne, and that none of us will ever cancel that privileged reservation: but that we may all, without a single exception, succeed in meeting each other some day in that glorious spot.

O then it will be sweet to discuss the mercies of the Lord in having called us to the seraphic life and in having kept us to the end on the Seraphic Highway. And then the poor and lowly garb which we are wearing now will have been transformed into a resplendent robe of immortal and unspeakable glory, rivalling in splendor the luster of the very angels and the archangels of God. Amen.

LECTURE XII.

The Tertiary Cord

FOR THE CEREMONY OF PROFESSION

"I, a prisoner in the Lord"
(Ephes., 4, 1).

ONE never boasts of anything that causes him confusion. What humiliates him, or hurts his pride or self-respect, he does his best to hide and keep hidden. But what redounds to his glory, and what makes for his pleasure and happiness, one is naturally inclined to make much of; and he tells the world about it. Eager as a man is to live down sources or blots of disgrace, so desirous he is of rendering more conspicuous and pronounced his titles or claims to honor.

A Prisoner of Jesus

This reflection accounts for the glowing emphasis with which St. Paul vauntingly styles himself "A Prisoner in the Lord", or a captive of the Lord. Otherwise to be a prisoner is a stigma of shame. No one cares to wear the uniform of a convict longer than he must. Everyone is careful to obliterate every vestige of having once been jailed. Not so when there is a question of being a prisoner or captive of Jesus Christ, "Whom to serve is to reign."

Tied Fast to Christ Forever

You, dear novices, who are to make your profession in the Order of Penance today, are about to bind yourselves forever to Jesus Christ by the cord of St. Francis, which is symbolical of the holy rule, the faithful compliance with which will be sure to hold you fast to Jesus Christ Crucified to the end of your lives. You have been trying out this holy cord during your novitiate: its drawing and holding power with reference to yourselves. You have found it to be strong, reliable, dear and sweet, just because it has in so bland yet secure a manner kept you close to Jesus on the Cross.

Where Slavery Is Sweet

For this reason you are here to declare solemnly today, that you want to live by the rule of St. Francis, or be bound by his cord, as long as you live. What others look upon us an irksome shackle, you, under the influence of divine grace, have found to be a welcome protection; what the flesh rebels against as a tyrannical subjugation, your spirit embraces as a delicious emancipation. Hence you are willing and eager to be bound by it not for a mere day or week or month, but all the years of your earthly pilgrimage.

Napoleon Was Right

In the height of his power Napoleon I of France, referring to St. Francis of Assisi, is said on a

certain occasion to have exclaimed: "Behold the man whose rope was mightier than my sword!" If he said the words or not, history bears out the truth of them, as we shall now proceed to consider. This reflection may inspire us with a greater love and appreciation of the seraphic cord, and a more vivid feeling of gratitude for the grace and privilege of wearing so glorious a bond, rendered sacred through having been and being worn by so many holy men and women of the past as well as of the present time.

The Rope and the Sword

The rope of St. Francis has been not only mightier than the sword of Napoleon, but its influence has also been more suave, more wholesome, beneficial and lasting. The sword of Napoleon brought death, the rope of Francis brought life; the sword of Napoleon generated and inflamed hatred and the spirit of revenge among nations, the rope of Francis begot and fanned the spirit of love and mutual forgiveness; the sword of Napoleon spread carnage and destruction broadcast over many lands, the rope of Francis fostered individual and social life and growth wherever its influence was allowed to exert itself.

The Leading String of St. Francis

The world laughs at the seraphic cord, and considers its use superstitious, preposterous and

childish. Even self-styled liberal and illuminated Catholics at times glance at it with a painful shrug of the shoulders denoting pity mixed with contempt for the poor benighted devotees who place their trust in so ridiculous a thing. But here again the words of the Master apply: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt., 11, 25). Our Lord wants those who aspire after the kingdom of heaven to become like children. Children are safe and happy in the leading strings of their loving, watchful and solicitious mothers. Spiritually the children of St. Francis feel secure and blessed in the valuable leading string of his humble cord.

The Bridle of Safety and Efficiency

To a true tertiary the cord of their sainted founder is what the bridle is to the spirited horse. It keeps him within the confines of temperance and moderation. It restrains him from making perilous leaps amd disastrous bounds of temperament, character or passion. It saves him from his own possible fatuity, dangerous impulsiveness and regrettable impetuosity. It holds him to, and leads him on the narrow path of virtue, piety, penance and godliness. Disagreeable, bitter and taxing at first, it soon grows pleasant,

delightful and soothing, so that its willing and enthusiastic victim fondly and proudly says with St. Paul: "I, a prisoner in the Lord!"

The Rope of Salvation

In more than one instance the cord of St. Francis proves to be like the rope cast at the decisive moment to a drowning person. It saves a life, not merely for time but for eternity. The man is drowning in his self-indulgence; in his love of the world and its luring vanities; in the pursuit of some passionate attachment or aversion; in a wave of riches, or in a whirpool of indigence; in a tide of prosperity or an ocean of distress: but in the providential moment he senses the call to the seraphic life; it is the saving cord that is cast to him by the mercy of God. He grips it frantically and nervously at first, then lovingly and composedly. It not only draws him out of the depths in which he is sinking, but it also moors him fast to the Lord and His redeeming grace and love.

The Rope, a Saving Guard

At occasions of public danger, such as menacing conflagrations, for instance, a rope is used to keep the people within a safe radius from peril. Many owe their lives to this device. Morally the cord of St. Francis is such a safety appliance. By its salutary prohibitions in addition to its wise injunctions, it has kept and keeps many souls

from the fire that will never be quenched. For the time being a curious and eager spectator may fret at the restraint of the guarding rope. But when he sees others who for not being restrained plunged to their doom by getting too close to the fire, he is grateful for the confinement forced upon him. Similarly the tertiary, realizing how many souls thrust themselves into the inextinguishable fire through a lack of proper safeguards, thanks God warmly and continuously for the precious moral check of the cord of St. Francis.

The World Has Its Ropes

The world scoffs at this sacred rope. But what about the world itself? It has its ropes, too, in the way of social forms, conventions, usages, inhibitions, prohibitions, ostracisms and excommunications. Frequently their observance is immensely more trying, vexing and galling than the wearing of the cord of St. Francis and the compliance with his rule are to the tertiary. And yet those unpleasant ropes must be attended to by the votaries of the world, which exacts this tribute with tyrannical insistence, and without the sweet reward in store for the faithful cord-wearer. After all it is easier and sweeter to please God and render oneself acceptable to Him than to please men and win their fickle and questionable approval and endorsement.

Inequality—Equality

Moreover, the world has its ropes or signs of demarcation between classes and classes: the rich and the poor, the socially prominent and the common herd, the politically powerful and the weak and friendless. The line of distinction is rigid and inexorable. Each one must stay on his side of the rope.

The cord of the Little Poor Man of Assisi, however, embraces all classes and professions. It obliterates all artificial and material distinctions, and stamps all those who wear it, whatever may be their financial, social or political standing, as brothers and sisters, as children of the one seraphic Father. Far from being strung between them as a barrier of caste, it is rather flung around them all as belonging to one great family, knitted together by the firm and delightful bonds of Franciscan love. Hence all receive the same manner of scapular, and the same kind of cord. Their only gradation is derived from their greater or lesser love of poverty, humility, simplicity, and the desire to become more and more like Jesus Christ Crucified: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal., 2, 20).

"To Be Pretty You Must Suffer"

There is a French proverb which says, that to be pretty or beautiful one must suffer. Needless to hint at the many and divers sufferings men

and, particularly, women submit to in the interest of beauty. To single out one phase of these mortifications, think of the various reducing belts and cords used by persons of both sexes in order to return their form to, and keep it in proper girth and dimensions. The torture these instruments inflict and the inconveniences they cause are cheerfully borne as a sacrifice to vanity.

Spiritual Rather than Corporal Beauty

Why, then, should not the soul also employ a similar apparatus, in the shape of the Franciscan cord, to forestall or reduce the swelling of pride or conceit, the bloated feeling of self-sufficiency, the surfeit of worldly possessions and pampering of self, to which unregenerate nature has such a strong tendency? Why should the same process be considered wisdom when there is question of the beauty and symmetry of the body, which will soon be rendered into ashes, and folly when there is involved the loveliness and just proportion of the soul which is endowed with immortality?

"Give Me Rope!"

What the children of the world clamor for most of all is, in their common parlance, a lot of rope. The more personal independence or license they have, the better. But the very grant of too much rope usually proves their undoing. They get tangled up in their own passions, dissipations

and debaucheries until they trip and fall, helplessly tied and bound. This procedure received its most terrifying example in Judas the traitor. He was hopelessly involved and fettered by his passion, and consequently enchained by the devil, before he dangled from a tree at the end of the suicidal rope to which he had recourse to put an end to his unbearable regret and stifling remorse.

"Hold Me Close!"

Is it, therefore, not infinitely better to be held close and fast to God and His holy will by the sweet and comforting rope of St. Francis, and by it to be drawn nearer and nearer from day to day unto Calvary and the Redeemer upon the Cross, and thus to have every claim to share in His glorious resurrection and His everlasting power and bliss in heaven? It is infinitely preferable to be wholesomely reined and checked in this short life and, in consequence, to be ecstatically independent and free in eternity, than to run loose and wild for a brief period on earth, and then to be mercilessly and relentlessly shackled forever in hell. One of these conditions will be ours. We cannot remain neutral. We must make, and we are making the choice now.

The Lord Is Pleased

You, dear novices, who are on the point of professing publicly, that the cord of St. Francis

and the rule it symbolizes will always be your line of conduct, are choosing well. Or, rather, the Lord has chosen you; you have not chosen Him. He called you first. But you do well in responding to His call with all your heart and soul. You pleased Him much by answering His call the first time by donning the holy habit; you please Him more today by promising Him that you will wear this sacred uniform forever.

"Come and Taste How Sweet the Lord Is"

When you entered the service of the Lord in the Order of Penance as novices you acted on the testimony of others who told you that the yoke of the Lord, as it was borne by St. Francis, is wondrously sweet and His burden light. Now, after a year's experience, you no longer require the testimony of others for this experience. You have found it verified in your own case quickly and completely. Having tried out His service thoroughly after the manner of St. Francis you want no other master than Jesus Christ. Hence you will now give Him your word of honor, that you will remain faithful in His service to the end of your days.

Like Holy Baptism and Martyrdom

Of the solemn profession of vows in religious orders in the strict sense the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church say many grand and

comforting things. They declare, for example, that it is similar in its effects to holy baptism, inasmuch as it restores baptismal innocence if it it has been lost, and qualifies the subject of it for immediate entrance into heaven, in case he dies immediately after his profession. They compare it to martyrdom saying that, whereas martyrdom is a final immolation of the victim by violence, the religious profession implies the candidate's perpetual immolation by love. In the eyes of God, therefore, it has the value and merit of martyrdom.

The Third Order, being a religious order not in the strict but only in a broad sense of the term, can not lay claim to the same consoling assurances on behalf of its members who make their profession. But in their measure and degree by this act of religion they win God's pleasure and complacency and His consequent favors and bounties for this life and the next.

No Magnetism Equal to the Magnetism of Jesus

In the Canticle of Canticles the soul says to her divine Lover: "Draw me. We will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments" (Cant., 1, 3). Our Savior has used the cord of His great servant and lover Francis to draw you after the odor of His ointments; hence you now show your gratitude by wanting to be bound by it and to it forever. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw

all things to Myself" (John, 12, 32). Jesus employed the seraphic cord to draw and fasten you to Himself; hence you are now going to promise, that you will cherish and love and treasure this holy rope forever. As did the saintly Capuchin lay-brother who used to say: "I should not exchange one inch of my blessed cord for all the kingdoms and empires in the world."

No Cords Like the Cords of Adam

"I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love" (Osee, 11, 4). Now that the Lord has drawn you and all of us unto Himself by this cord of the seraph of love, it will be our part to hold on to it to the end, even as an aviator holds on to the rope of a parachute that keeps him from falling to his death: with this difference, however, that while the parachute invariably comes down sooner or later, we hope, by means of this heavenly rope, gradually, and in God's own day, to be drawn up to heaven, to the very side of Francis, before the throne of Jesus Glorified. Amen.

LECTURE XIII.

The Visitation

"Go, and see if all be well with thy brethren" (Gen., 37, 14).

IN every religious order a periodical, usually an annual visitation is prescribed as a feature of the highest importance. Its purpose is to keep alive, fresh and active the first spirit of the order in the individuals as well as in the community at large; to eliminate what abuses or laxity or indifference may have crept or may be creeping in; to make provision for new phases of development, modified conditions and changing situations; to give every member of the order an opportunity to give free expression to his or her views regarding the order in general, or the local community, or his or her personal self.

The Visitation a Vital Point of the Rule

The Order of Penance, being a religious order in the true, though wide sense of the word, very wisely embodies in its rule the factor of the visitation. The rule says: "The Curator, who is called the Visitor, shall zealously watch over the observance of the Rule. For this purpose he shall, if possible, visit the places where the societies are

established, every year, or oftener, if need be, and shall call a meeting which all the prefects and all members of the association shall be ordered to attend. Should the Visitor recall any associate to his duty by an admonition or command, or should he assign him any salutary penance, such associate shall receive the admonition with modesty, and shall not refuse to perform the penance." Wherever this point of the rule is regularly and conscientiously adhered to, the order thrives materially and spiritually, in the quality and in the quantity of its members. Whereas if the visitation is made light of and more or less ignored, the fraternity will sooner or later disclose the baneful results of this serious neglect in all round atrophy, lethargy and decadence.

Inspection Is Important Everywhere

Even in civic, political, financial and commercial concerns a close and systematic visitation or inspection is considered indispensable for the efficient conduct of business. Our post-office department, for instance, would not be reliable and satisfactory, if the visitors or inspectors were not continually at work throughout the country; neither would our army and navy, our railroads, schools, hospitals or other public institutions give satisfaction without the element of ever-recurring investigation or visitation.

Joseph Was Sent as a Visitor

In the Old Testament we read that the Patriarch Jacob sent his son Joseph to see how his brethren were doing. He said to Joseph: "See if all be well with thy brethren." Unfortunately Joseph found that all was not well with the brethren. On the contrary he discovered that they were addicted to very evil practices, which he felt in duty bound to report to his father. This was a visitation.

It was different from the one we are having here today. In the first place I have not been sent here to visit you. Your Rev. Director invited and requested me to come. He did this in the interest of this fraternity. Whilst he is doing what he can to promote your welfare, he feels that help from the outside will not be amiss. The Visitor may assist his efforts and advance his aims regarding your advancement in the seraphic spirit, which is nothing else than the love of Jesus Crucified. Hence I am here.

A Distinct Compliment

At the same time this visitation is a distinct compliment to you. Your Rev. Director would hardly have asked for the visitation had he not felt satisfied, that his fraternity was in a flourishing condition. He was sure from the start that the Visitor, unlike Joseph of old, would find little to displease him and to deserve blame, but he

would rather find much to console him and merit his approbation.

The Purpose of the Visitation

Whilst the Visitor is at times in duty bound, much to his sorrow, to point out and extirpate certain irregularities in a fraternity that cry for correction, the primary purpose of the visitation is not to find fault but to encourage; not to rebuke but to commend; not to pick flaws, but to mark degrees of progress; not to make the subjects of the visitation feel cheap and disheartened, but to render them fonder and prouder than ever of their membership in the army of the Little Poor Man of Assisi.

The Apostles Perform Visitation

One day St. Paul said to his associate St. Barnabas: "Let us return and visit our brethren in all the cities wherein we have preached the word of the Lord, to see how they do" (Acts, 15, 36). On his tour of visitation St. Paul discovered certain things which pained him keenly. In Corinth and elsewhere he had to excommunicate such as had given and were giving great scandal. But on the other hand he was compensated by splendid and highly edifying sights on the part of the great majority of the newly converted Christians. In the same manner the Visitor of the Third Order may also be compelled here and

there to banish one or the other member from the order for disedification and misconduct. Ordinarily, however, his work, observations and experiences are pleasing, gratifying and inspiring. I have reasons to believe mine shall not be otherwise at this visitation.

By Way of Analogy: General Visitation

The best way, perhaps, to get the right view of the visitation and its contemplated effects is to form an analogy between the visitation of a religious order in the strict sense and that of the Third Order. At the visitation of a convent three things in particular are given attention. There is first of all the inquiry into the general material and spiritual condition of the cloister: its financial state, its religious discipline and regular observance of the rules of the order and the like.

Local Visitation

Secondly, a local inspection is undertaken. The convent church or chapel and the various other public and private rooms of the community are visited with an eye to their compliance or non-compliance with the regulations of the order.

Personal Visitation

Finally there is the personal visitation. Every member of the house is summoned by the Visitor for a personal interview, in which the Visitor

asks the subject of the visitation a series of questions regarding his personal religious life, as well as of that of the community, and gives him an opportunity in all freedom and candor to make what remarks, suggestions and requests he may deem fit and timely. The Visitor may say, for instance: "How are you getting on in the convent? Are you satisfied and happy? If not, what's the trouble? Do you find it difficult to observe the rules in general or in a certain case?" Then the Visitor may have a personal reprimand to administer because of what he has heard with reference to the subject; and, again, he may pay the subject a well deserved compliment, supply valuable advice, or promise substantial endorsement and help.

There's a Difference

Since the Third Order is not a religious order in the strict sense, the visitation of it and its members can not be held in so complete, directly personal, and in so authoritative a manner as in the cloister or monastery. But some resemblance there is in the manner and results of both visitations.

They Meet and Discuss

As regards the general visitation, it is conducted by the Visitor in a meeting with the Rev. Director and the officers of the fraternity. In this meeting items of interest to the fraternity at large are

investigated and discussed: whether the meetings are regularly held; what their attendance is; the increase or decrease in membership; the care of the novices; the propaganda for new members; the care of the sick and needy members; the prayers for the deceased members; the works of religion and charity pursued by the fraternity; the interest of the order in the affairs of the parish; the condition of the treasury; the number of officers and the manner in which the several officers perform their duties; the official books of the fraternity and their keeping; the state of the library and its uses, etc. The Visitor invites suggestions of improvement anent the fraternity, and opens and nurses a free and spirited discussion of them.

What localities the order has will then be inspected, and if some amelioration is possible, it will receive warm and sympathetic attention from the Visitor.

The Personal Interviews

Of the three aforesaid investigations the personal one is the most important and most effective. If all its individual members are as they should be, the fraternity will necessarily be a model one. Whilst a personal interview of the Visitor with every member of the order would be desirable in theory, in reality it is often not practicable, owing to the large number of tertiaries

and other reasons. Before and at the visitation an announcement is made by the Director and also by the Visitor, that whoever desires a personal interview with the Visitor is welcome to it, and should not hesitate in the least to apply for it; nor should he fear to speak his mind to the Visitor freely and candidly.

No Lure for Gossipers

Of course, this invitation is by no means a bait for idle and uncharitable gossip, for the retailing of unfounded tales and hazy reports, for the venting of morbid and useless criticism or fanciful suggestions: but it is a sincere bid for well-meant constructive criticism, and for the submitting of certain personal trials, disadvantages, handicaps, doubts and misgivings to the Visitor, who is experienced in Third Order work, and whose power of dispensation may effectually deliver the earnest tertiary from a troubled mind and an uneasy heart. Absolute frankness is a most valuable asset in a subject of visitation.

Be Your Own Visitor

Whereas a personal interview with the Visitor will usually be an isolated case for the ordinary tertiary, yet at the visitation each member of the order can and ought to ask himself or herself the questions which the Visitor would ask in a personal meeting.

Such questions are, for example: How long have you been a member of the order? Have you—if you are in the order a year or more—made your profession? Do you regularly wear the habit of the order, recite your daily office and take part in the monthly Holy Communion and meeting of the fraternity? Do you take an interest in the order, its maintenance, its growth and influence? What is the amount of your monthly contribution to the purposes of the order?

How Is Your Home?

Is your home like a religious house, similar in its way and measure to a convent? Are there emblems of our holy faith on the walls of it, such as a crucifix, pictures of our Lord, His Mother and the saints, and, too, a font always supplied with holy water? Are there perhaps pictures, papers, magazines and books in your house that disgrace a Catholic, let alone a tertiary home?

Do you keep and pay for a Third Order magazine in addition to the diocesan paper and other Catholic literature? Have you a copy of the Bible, or the Lives of the Saints, an explanation of the doctrines, rites and usages of our holy Church in your house? Are the family and table prayers faithfully observed? Are cursing, swearing, profanity and unnecessary oaths barred? Do you take a lively, active and generous interest in your parish church?

In case you possess property or other means, have you duly made a will, and have you therein attended to the just claims of religion and charity? Are you generous towards the home and foreign missions, especially those in charge of the Seraphic Order, and do you do your share towards fostering and aiding vocations to the priesthood and religious life? Are you solicitous about visiting and helping the sick and poor, particularly the members of your fraternity, and about praying for the departed members? Do you appreciate and turn to good account the splendid opportunity your affiliation with the Third Order gives you to gain rich and substantial indulgences for yourself and the Poor Souls? Are you more or less a tertiary today than when you received the habit? And if less so, why?

Remember That You Are a Religious

The continual remembrance of a tertiary, that he is a religious, will spur him to an unflagging and unremitting fervor. If the prescriptions of the rule appear hard to him, and he is tempted to ignore them without a good excuse, he will recall the hard life religious in the strict sense submit to day in and day out, and that uncomplainingly and cheerfully.

Twelve Against Seventy-Six

What is his little office of twelve Our Fathers, for instance, compared to the seventy-six Our

Fathers of the Franciscan lay-brothers? And yet these brothers, attending to various other pious exercises daily, do more annual or mechanical or clerical labor than many a tertiary. The same proportion or disproportion may be established in all the injunctions and restrictions of their respective rules. Therefore, if Brothers and Sisters of the Seraphic Order living in community can joyfully bear so much for God and their souls, why should a Religious living in the world balk at and shrink from much less?

A High School of Piety

The Third Order is justly called a high or advanced school of piety. It reflects no credit upon the pupil of a high school, if in reading, writing and arithmetic he is surpassed by students of the grammar school. Thus a tertiary who is outclassed in humility, charity, prayerfulness and unworldliness by such as have not the benefit of the religious life, has every reason to be abashed.

Furthermore, a pupil who has attended high school for years without making any noticeable progress in his studies, whilst his fellow pupils have achieved wonderful success and advancement in the same school and under the same teacher and conditions, has only himself to blame for his retardment.

Similarly the tertiary, who after years of membership in the Seraphic Order has made no

appreciable progress in holiness, in self-knowledge and self-hatred, and in the love of Jesus Christ and His Cross, whilst many others in the same order and fraternity are advancing from virtue to virtue (Ps. 83, 8), has reason for earnest and candid self-inspection and self-blame.

Find the Cause

There must be a reason. The sooner it is found and the evil corrected, the better. Perhaps the cause is the neglect of the monthly meeting, or of the daily examination of conscience, or of good spiritual reading. A single speck of dust in the carburetor can keep the best automobile from running. A single wilful defect in the observance of the rule can interfere materially with a tertiary's progress in perfection.

Reformation Leads to Perfection

Nor is this said in a discouraging vein. One of the purposes of the visitation is reformation, and where reformation is intended, foibles and deflections are not a surprise, but they are expected as a matter of course. And perfection, they say, is the product of continual reformation. In the Bible we read that, when in the reign of King Josias the Book of the Law was found again, and its contents were read to the Jews, the people were much affected and wept aloud with remorse and sorrow at having neglected and ignored so long

the saving law, made known to them and their forefathers in so loving a manner by the Lord.

At the visitation of the Third Order like effects are often produced in souls who have grown careless and indifferent in their holy vocation, and have become quite oblivious of its advantages and obligations. Being reminded of them in a solemn and impressive manner, they realize the indignity and danger of their conduct, and resolve to return to their first fervor and love for the order and its ideals.

Your Slate Is Washed Clean

In connection with the visitation the General Absolution is imparted as a source of relief and solace to the members. Through it all the lapses against the rules of the order, provided they are duly repented of, are condoned. This is implied in the plenary indulgence conveyed by the Absolution. It qualifies the tertiaries to start anew, with an unwritten slate, as it were, and with a clear record and an easy conscience.

This consideration must animate you to continuous efforts in aiming to resemble St. Francis and, through him, Jesus Crucified more and more. At the visitation we all have reason to say with St. Paul: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect: but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus"

(Philipp., 3, 12); and we all feel as though the words of the Bible (2 Kings, 19, 7,) were addressed to each one of us: "Arise; for thou hast yet a great way to go." Our answer must be as resolute as that of the Psalmist (76, 11,) "And I said: Now have I begun!" In ordinary schools there is a period of graduation or of finishing the course of them. In the school of holiness no one ever graduates in this life. Some advancement or improvement is always possible.

The Drummer Boy

The story of the drummer boy of Napoleon is famous. At a certain stress of a battle which seemed to be developing unfavorably for his army the great general bade the drummer to beat a retreat. Tearfully the valiant young man looked up at Napoleon and said: "Sir, I do not know how. My master never taught me how to beat a retreat. But, Sir, I can beat a charge. I have beat charges in situations more desperate than this, and oh! what conquests your men achieved! Let me beat one now, and they will win again!" Napoleon yielded. The charge inflamed the soldiers with the bravery of heroism, and like a tornado they mowed down the enemy unto a complete victory.

"If Others, Why Not I?"

So hearty, courageous and final must be your reply in case you should be tempted through

discouragement or pusillanimity to dismiss the Franciscan habit and to discontinue the seraphic life. Remember the past victories of Francis and his order. Men and women in much harder situations than yourself have persevered in it to the end, conquering every temptation and vanquishing every enemy. If they could do it, you can do it, too.

The Last Visitation

And if you do, you will be ready and eager for the final visitation which will be performed by Jesus Christ Himself immediately upon your passing from this life, and upon the issue of which your eternity will depend. This visitation is not far off for anyone of us. For one or the other it may be very close, possibly before the next visitation of this fraternity will be held. Whenever it comes, may our Savior find us ready, a hundred per cent children of St. Francis, having doubled every talent confided to us, and well deserving of His entrancing promise: "Every one, therefore, that shall confess me before men, I will also confess before My Father Who is in heaven!" (Matt., 10, 32.) Amen.

LECTURE XIV.

The Stigmatization of St. Francis

"We shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John, 3, 2).

THESE words of the beloved apostle have reference to the glory of the saints in heaven, where they shall be made to partake of, and hence to resemble the very nature of God, because they shall see Him just as He is: which would not be possible unless they somehow were like to God in His divine essence.

The Living Photograph of Jesus

It has been beautifully said, that God at times grows homesick for His saints. He becomes impatient to have them with Him and reward them. He can not take them to heaven before their time, which He Himself has appointed. What does He do? He brings heaven down to them in visions, ecstacies and raptures. To no saint, since the time of the apostles, is God known to have done this in a greater measure than to our holy father St. Francis. Jesus, in a vision, made Francis like unto Him by imprinting His holy wounds upon him, and He let Francis see

Him just as He is: not indeed in His divine substance, but in His human nature in a glorified form. He made of Francis a true reflection, a wondrous resemblance of Himself; a living photograph, a replica, a duplicate of Himself.

The Pet of Jesus Crucified

Of all the saints St. Francis is the first one of whom we know with certainty that he had the wounds of our Savior; he received them in a most extraordinary manner; their reception and genuinity have been solemnly acknowledged by the Church which celebrates the mystery of them on September 17 of each year. And here it may be remarked, that after the apostles St. Francis is the only saint of whom the universal Church celebrates two feasts each year: the anniversary of his death and his stigmatization. A great testimony in favor of Francis is the enthusiastic and fervent manner in which the entire world still commemorates, after a lapse of seven hundred years, his reception of the sacred wounds of our Lord.

Look and Copy

To profit us, the meditation of this mystery must urge us to follow Francis in aiming to resemble more and more from day to day Jesus Christ Crucified. In the words of St. Paul Francis exhorts us saying: "Be ye followers of

me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor., 11, 1). What God said to Moses of old He now tells us: "Look, and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee in the mount" (Exodus, 25, 40). On Mt. La Verna we, the sons and daughters of St. Francis, have the pattern of how close and strong and ravishing our resemblance to Jesus Christ Crucified can and ought to be. There we are given an object lesson, a most vivid and plastic illustration of what the Apostle means when he exhorts us to live in a way "that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor., 4, 11). In the flesh of St. Francis not only the life but the very figure and appearance of Jesus were made manifest.

The Calvary of St. Francis

If a personal remark is permissible, I shall say, that it was my privilege on two different occasions to visit the sacred place where St. Francis received the holy wounds of our Lord. It is called Mt. Alverno or, in Italian, La Verna. It is a high mountain of the Apennines. At Florence, a city of international renown, you take the train to Bibbiena, not far away. At Bibbiena you begin the ascent of the mount. At a steady, ordinary gait the ascent requires about four hours of a continuous climb. On the way up, on both sides, one sees huge rocks cleft in twain. Tradition has it that the cleaving of those rocks occurred at our

Lord's death. Even then He seemed to prepare this mount as the Calvary of His dear son Francis.

The Chapel of the Stigmata

On top of the mountain there is a large monastery harboring about a hundred Friars Minor. At some distance from the monastery is the Chapel of the Stigmata, which encloses the hallowed spot on which St. Francis was kneeling as our Lord appeared to him to impress His wounds upon him. On the floor in the middle of the chapel is a large slab of stone with an inscription recording the memorable event. Twice every day, once at midnight, after the recitation of the matins and lauds, and once in the afternoon after vespers, the friars and pilgrims institute a procession from the monastery to the Chapel of the Stigmata.

Here, O Lord!

When they are all gathered in the chapel, two acolytes take their position immediately before the slab, and when they sing the beautiful versicle of the Church: "'Signasti, Domine, servum tuum Franciscum!" they insert the Latin adverb "hic" which means: here. Whilst pointing with their hands to the very place of the event they sing: "Here, O Lord, Thou didst mark Thy servant Francis!" And all present respond: "With the marks of our redemption." It is a very impressive

and touching ceremony. It leaves an indelible picture on the minds of all who witness it.

No doubt you would like to visit that holy place. Crowds of pilgrims annually wend their way there. But after all, it is not the physical contact with the place which counts most in devotions of this nature, but the attitude of the mind and the disposition of the soul. The lively faith in, and the ardent appreciation of the mystery produce effects. It is not unlikely, that many pilgrims in La Verna attending the solemnities at the shrine do not derive nearly so much benefit from the mystery as, perhaps, some of the readers of this lecture whose esteem and love for Francis and his wounds are stronger, deeper and more productive of godly acts and works.

The Story of the Stigmata

The event of the stigmatization, as it has been recorded to us, was as follows: St. Francis had the custom of keeping seven rigid fasts each year. One of these fasts was in preparation for the feast of the archangel St. Michael, for whom he had a particular devotion. He observed this fast in much prayer and contemplation on La Verna. In the year 1224 he was pursuing his wonted custom. It was about the time of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, near the middle of September, when the Saint was rapt in prayer in even for him an unusual manner.

His Vision of Visions

Presently there appeared to him a most luminous seraph of heaven with six wings outstretched. The seraph, who was no one else than Our Lord Himself, began to speak to Francis, who had been meditating in the most lively manner on the Passion of Christ. As He spoke, Francis experienced a mysterious and an altogether novel pain. It overcame him completely with its most delicious poignancy. When the vision was over, and Francis recovered from his swoon of love, he noticed to his unspeakable wonderment and delight on his hands and feet and in his side the wounds of Jesus Christ Crucified.

Imagine the joy of this man of God! It is the ambition of the saints to be like Jesus Christ. Now he was like Jesus not only in his soul but even in his body, upon which Christ had placed His authentic seal, confirming the bearer of it as His other self: His own dear and favorite double.

Mystic Photography

To follow Francis in his resemblance of Christ it will behoove us to inspect and consider the process of mystic photography, by means of which St. Francis became in so high a degree another Christ.

In the first place he went high upon a mountain, far away from the world. In the Bible mountains

have been much identified with the presence of God. On a mountain God appeared to Moses; on a mountain He published the Ten Commandments; on a mountain He appeared to Elias. Our Lord spoke His first sermon on a mountain; He was transfigured on a mountain; He retired to a mountain to pray. He began His Passion on Mt. Olivet, died on Mt. Calvary and ascended into heaven from Mt. Olivet. The heathens, too, associated the tops of mountains with the divinity.

Away to the Mountains

From the mountains there is an unobstructed vision and a far range which symbolize the majesty and infinity of God, while the solitude of the mountains typifies the rest and quietude of God. The reason we have so little success with our mystic photography often is some worldly object which comes between God and us: some sinful attachment, inordinate love or unholy passion. We need to get away from the world to remove this obstruction.

If a teacher has a pernicious influence over us, to evade the influence we must fly the teacher. The world is this pernicious teacher with regard to us. Its deadly influence inoculates the best of us most insidiously. We deny the influence. We call it by the name of broadmindedness and liberality of view. Often it is only worldly-mindedness and disguised godlessness.

You say it is impossible for you to get away from the world and repair up into a mountain. Here again, it is not the physical surroundings that matter, but the frame of the mind. Many a one on top of the highest mountain might spiritually be more engrossed in the things of the world than others in the very midst of the hum and din of the world's busy traffic.

Get the Right Perspective

Buildings and other structures that look large and vast when you are near them seem very small and tiny once you view them from a high mountain in the distance. So, too, the things and affairs of the world appear huge and momentous when we are wrapped up in them; but once we view them from the mountain of absorption in God they disclose all their smallness, fleetingness and nothingness. This explains why St. Francis, in the wake of St. Paul, could assert with joy, that he considered the world's best and most vaunted goods, such as glory, money and pleasure, as a loss and reputed them as dung in order to win Christ. Heaps of rubbish and refuse will not captivate but rather disgust you. Even so the world's vanities nauseate everyone who has the proper perspective of their hollowness from the mountain of God's knowledge and love.

Fasting and Prayer

Other essential conditions of the mystic photography of Francis were his long fasts and his incessant prayer and meditation on the Passion. Solitude alone is worthless, if it is not accompanied by the repression and the abandonment of self through penance, and the sweet communion with God in prayer. This is the reason why St. Francis lays so much stress on both these religious practices; and this explains too, why his true children make so much and are so fond of the various mortifications imposed by the rule, and why they are so devoted to their divine office.

Patient Waiting

Francis waited a long time ere Jesus placed the seal of His approbation upon him externally by the bestowal of His wounds. This did not occur until about twenty years after Francis' conversion, as he called it, and two years before his death. If it required so much time to perfect the image of Christ in Francis, this hero of holiness and seraph of love, why should we grow impatient and discouraged, if the resemblance with Christ in us is slow and gradual in its development?

No Day Without a Stroke

The ancient painter Apelles followed the motto: No day without a stroke. It brought him immortality. If we hold the same device in the

reproduction of Christ's image in us, it will be perfected by and by in God's own time. No day without a stroke! Every act of self-denial, of charity, of purity, or forgiveness of injuries, of prayerfulness is such a stroke. If we follow the rule of St. Francis in our respective order we shall be continually adding stroke upon stroke. The wearing of the habit, the daily office, the attendance at the monthly meetings, the monthly communion, the abstention from dangerous amusements and from immodesty in dress are master strokes in the lives of tertiaries.

External Manifestation Secondary

When Francis ascended La Verna in 1224 he did not have the stigmata. Yet he was about as holy as when he came down the mountain with them. What I want to point out is, that the external manifestation means little in comparison with the internal sanctity. In her process of beatification and canonization the Church attaches comparatively little value to the mere possession of the stigmata. It is the evidence of heroic virtues that impresses her. It is quite possible and even probable, that we meet people every day who, as far as their resemblance with Jesus Crucified goes, would be proportionally worthy to have the marks of His wounds upon them. God does not vouchsafe their impression to them, however, for the preservation of their

humility, and to spur them on to untiring zeal towards greater holiness.

The Power of One Man

What comes strongly home to us with regard to St. Francis is the marvelous power of one man over his fellowmen. As we are doing, millions of the sons and daughters of Francis are looking up to him with admiration and inspiration to a higher and more godlike life. And this influence of Francis has been exerted on countless numbers of men and women, young and old, in all ranks and professions of life, for the last seven hundred years; and it will continue to be exerted on the same large scale to the end of time. What accounts for this mysterious power?

Physically man is not very strong. The horse, for instance, is much stronger than he. Intellectually man is stronger than physically; his range is larger; but even here he is much confined; many mysteries of his own nature and environment escape him completely. Morally, however, his power can be practically without limits.

The Secret of Francis' Power

Francis is an outstanding illustration of this. What, I ask again, accounts for so much power? Our Lord gave the answer to this when He said of Himself: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John, 12, 32).

As long as our Savior moved about on this earth in liberty of action, when His hands were free to act and His feet free to walk, He had but a few followers. As long as His heart palpitated with life, and His voice rang with an authority that had no precedent, only a small band of disciples gathered about Him. But no sooner He was hoisted up on the cross, and nailed upon it with hands and feet, and His heart was pierced with a lance, and His voice was stilled in death, He began to attract all mankind to Himself. He converted the Cross, the gibbet of the deepest shame, into the symbol of the highest victory and glory.

Francis, too, as long as he wandered freely and light-heartedly about in the world of pleasure and earthly glory, had just a few adherents. But when he became crucified with Christ in a life of self-effacement and unworldiness; when he no longer lived, but Christ lived in him, his influence extended to all the world, and from generation to generation. Here, then, is the secret. If we want to wield a strong and wholesome influence over those with whom we come in contact, we must live so "that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh".

Face to Face

In conclusion, great as is the distinction conferred upon Francis in his stigmatization by our

Lord and we are the last ones to try to minimize it or derogate from its glory—but great as it is, it is as nothing, it is meagre and insignificant, compared to his heavenly glory, and the glory which will be ours too, if we remain faithful sons and daughters of St. Francis to the end. For while on La Verna he was made to resemble our Lord in the body, sacred as it is; and received His holy wounds, adorable as they are: we, if we remain true and loyal unto death, shall be made like to the very nature and substance of God in His divinity, for we shall see Him just as He is. What this means we can not now conceive. Yet we know it means this much, that soon in heaven we shall be happy with the blessedness of God, powerful with His might, enlightened with His knowledge, unchangeable with His immutability, and incessantly refreshed with ineffable delights, ecstacies and raptures by His inexhaustible fecundity: the sweet and happy end of the Seraphic Highway. Amen.

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